
**Office on Smoking and Health
Focus Groups for Specific Populations:
Smoking Among African American and White Young Adults**

**Part 1:
Findings from College Smokers Focus Groups**

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College Smokers

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- C. Focus Group Flyer
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- E. Informed Consent Form
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College Non-Smokers

- G. Focus Group Discussion Guide
- H. Focus Group Recruitment Screener
- I. Pre-discussion Information Sheet
- J. Informed Consent Form
- K. Pre-discussion Information Sheet Results

I. Purpose of the Study

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, contributing to 400,000 deaths per year. Despite progress that has led to a decrease in smoking rates during the 1970s and early 1980s, smoking among youth (aged 12–18) increased sharply during the 1990s. However, by 1999, youth prevalence started showing signs of either leveling off or declining, and in 2001, 28.5 percent of high school students smoked cigarettes, down from 36.4 percent in 1997 and 34.8 percent in 1999. Current smoking is defined as having smoked on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey.¹

Young adults (aged 18–25 years) outpace all age groups in their smoking prevalence. In the 2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 39.1 percent of young adults reported past month use of cigarettes—an increase over the 38.3% reported in 2000.² Young adults (aged 18–22 years) enrolled in college full-time in 2001 had lower smoking prevalence than part-time college students and those not enrolled in post-secondary education. Yet full-time college students reported significant smoking levels—32.9%. Their peers not enrolled full time reported 44.6% past month cigarette use.³

Whether this increase in young adult smoking prevalence represents an increase in young adult initiation, or a “cohort effect,” i.e., youth who were smoking at high rates in the early to mid-1990s are now young adults, increasing the young adult smoking rate potentially only temporarily is not clear. The rise in young adult smoking may mainly be attributed to a cohort effect—a natural consequence of the aging of a once younger, higher-smoking population. Some argue that young adults are a clear target of the tobacco industry’s marketing, and that today’s smoking rates are at risk of continuing to increase and remaining on the rise unless prevention and cessation efforts are initiated quickly. Others suggest a combination—that both the cohort and initiation trends are contributing simultaneously to young adult tobacco use, which potentially could bring overall adult rates back up.

The scope of prevention programs may need to be expanded to focus on young adults. Certainly these trends need to be monitored. Historically, transition years have been troublesome for youth smoking uptake. Perhaps the transition from high school to college or work is posing a new risk, reflecting an older set of “tweens” who are not between childhood and teenage years, but between older teen and full adult years.

States, communities, and partners are expressing their concern about this upward trend to the Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) of the U.S. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Many states and partners are eager to move toward interventions to curb the potential widespread, continuing hike in this age group. In response to this concern, it is critical that OSH gain a better understanding of what is happening in this age group to assist states in effectively investing their resources in ways that reach at-risk populations.

Currently, little is known about the complex relationships between advertising and other personal, social, and environmental factors that may also influence a young adult’s decision to

¹*MMWR*, 2000, May 17, 2000 vol.51, no. 19.

²Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse for 2001.

³*Ibid.*

initiate or continue smoking cigarettes. To improve its understanding of what motivates young adults to initiate and continue cigarette smoking, OSH contracted with ORC Macro to conduct focus groups with young adults in the Atlanta area to provide qualitative information that will help OSH better design and tailor prevention and cessation health communication messages for this audience.

Between April and November 2001, eight focus groups were conducted with young adult smokers who attend one of Atlanta's four historically black colleges or universities (HBCUs) or one (non-HBCU) university that does not target specific racial or ethnic groups.⁴ Because recruitment of women smokers who attended HBCUs was so difficult, in-depth information on the reasons for recruitment difficulties was collected revealed that women who attended HBCUs were far less likely to report smoking cigarettes than women who attended the non-HBCUs. To explore the reasons for this apparent low use of tobacco, two groups of female HBCU students who reported that they did not smoke cigarettes were also recruited.⁵

Also, the study included eight groups with African American and Caucasian young adults who have either never attended college or have attended less than a year of college and do not plan to return in the next five years. These not-in-college young adult focus groups examined the influence of personal, social, and environmental factors on their decisions to begin or continue smoking. The results of the not-in-college focus groups will be compared to the findings from young adults who attend college to identify similarities and differences, and will be presented in a separate report.

This document describes the methodology of, and findings from, the eight groups conducted with young adult college smokers and two groups of HBCU female non-smokers. A report on the not-in-college groups and the comparison between college and not-in-college will follow.

II. Methodology

Due to the exploratory and formative nature of this study, focus groups were chosen as the most appropriate research technique because of their "information rich" nature. Focus group discussions, or "intensive group interviews," are a flexible tool for exploring respondent awareness, behavior, concerns, beliefs, experiences, motivation, operating practices, and future plans related to a particular topic and sub-issues. They are particularly useful for generating an in-depth understanding of issues since a skilled moderator can amplify individual responses through group comments and feedback. In addition, a skilled moderator can follow up or probe on certain tangents or views that were unanticipated in the design of the moderator's guide, often yielding new information or additional nuances of existing information. Thus, focus groups represent a critical method for generating promising directions for new areas of research for the development of a wide range of health communication activities.

Despite its many advantages, focus group methodology has limitations. Findings from focus group discussions are neither quantitative nor generalizable to the population as a whole. For instance, the vast majority of African American students who participated in these focus groups

⁴For this report, the four Historically Black Colleges or Universities will be referred to as HBCU and the predominantly White university will be referred to as non-HBCU.

⁵For this report, female HBCU students who reported they did not smoke cigarettes, and met other eligibility criteria discussed later in this report, will be referred to as HBCU female non-smokers.

attended HBCUs in the Atlanta area. Their experiences may or may not reflect those of other students who attend HBCUs outside of the Atlanta area nor of African American students who attend predominantly white universities. Similarly, the experiences of the non-HBCU students cannot be extrapolated to all students who attend predominantly white universities.

Development of the Discussion Guide for College Smokers

The focus group discussion guide was developed during several discussions between Reba Griffith and Dr. Linda Pederson of OSH, and ORC Macro staff. As part of this process, specific research questions were developed to serve as the theoretical framework for the discussion guide. The research questions below were developed specifically for the college smoking groups, but were also instrumental in the development of the discussion guide for the not-in-college young adult groups and the groups of HBCU female non-smokers (See OHS's forthcoming report on the not-in-college young adult focus groups).

The focus group discussion guides were based on the following research questions:

- A. What are the factors that influence smoking initiation and smoking behavior and maintenance in young adults?
 - Why do young adults adopt or initiate smoking in general? In college?
 - How do social norms affect smoking initiation or smoking behavior and maintenance in young adults?
 - What role do peers play in influencing or supporting smoking initiation or smoking behavior and maintenance among young adults?
 - What role does the environment (e.g., college campus, social setting, living situation) play in smoking initiation or smoking behavior or maintenance among young adults?
 - What role does the family play in smoking initiation or smoking behavior or maintenance among young adults?
 - What role does the tobacco industry play in influencing or supporting smoking initiation or smoking behavior or maintenance among young adults?
- B. Are the factors that influence smoking initiation and smoking behavior and maintenance the same for males and females?
 - If not, does this difference have a differential impact on smoking initiation and smoking behavior or maintenance of males versus females?
- C. Are the factors that influence smoking initiation and smoking behavior or maintenance the same for students from HBCUs and students from non-HBCUs?
 - Does marketing by the tobacco industry differ on HBCU and non-HBCU campuses? If so, how does this difference affect smoking initiation or smoking behavior and maintenance of students at these institutions?

- D. Do messages exist that college students believe may neutralize or countervail the influence of these factors on smoking initiation or smoking behavior and maintenance among young adults?
- Do these messages differ by gender or by institution?
- E. What factors influence preference for menthol versus non-menthol cigarettes?
- Do these factors differ by gender or by institution?

A discussion guide was developed, using these questions as the basis. The guide is divided into four sections, the first two of which provide insight into why college students choose to initiate and continue smoking cigarettes. The third section briefly explores perceptions of racial and ethnic similarities and differences in preferences for menthol and non-menthol cigarettes. The last section asks respondents to discuss the messages or strategies they think might be effective in convincing other college students like themselves to quit smoking. A copy of the guide is available in Appendix A.

Audience Segmentation

Focus groups rely on “purposive” sampling; that is, they are made up of relatively homogenous groups of people with something in common that is related to the study.⁶ A combination of exclusionary and segmentation criteria is necessary to identify these relatively homogenous groups. At the outset of the study, the OSH and ORC Macro team knew that the groups would consist of college students; however, it became clear that multiple ways exist to define a college student. For instance, “a college student” might be someone who is an undergraduate or graduate, commuter or residential student who attends a 2- or 4-year college or university that is public or private.

To define “college students” more precisely, participation was limited to students who attend 4-year private residential colleges. These students were thought to be more likely to live on campus and participate in social events with their peers. At the time, based on anecdotal evidence, the team also thought that tobacco companies might specifically target college campuses for advertising, and that students attending these institutions would be able to discuss how this advertising occurred and whether it had an impact on their decisions to initiate or continue smoking. In addition, the segmentation scheme (discussed later) would allow the project leaders to determine if tobacco companies targeted HBCU campuses differently than non-HBCU campuses.

To minimize costs and in recognition of the abundance of local eligible institutions, the project leaders chose to conduct all the groups in the metropolitan Atlanta area. To ensure that participants in the groups would be as similar as possible in terms of economic and educational background, three privately funded colleges—Emory University, Morehouse College (a male-only HBCU campus), and Spelman College (a female-only HBCU campus)—were initially chosen. Due to great difficulty in recruiting female smokers at Spelman (discussed in further

⁶Krueger, Richard A. *Analyzing and Reporting Focus Group Results*, Focus Group Kit 6, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, 1988, p. 71.

detail under “Recruitment”), female students who attended Clark-Atlanta University and Morris Brown College, two neighboring HBCUs, were also recruited.

Any student who attended these institutions was eligible to participate in the focus groups. Although participants in the Emory focus groups were predominantly Caucasian and participants in the HBCU groups were predominately African American, people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds also participated. For example, in the HBCU groups, one student was identified as white and three others checked more than one racial or ethnic category. In the non-HBCU groups, two students identified themselves as Asian, one as Latino, one as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, one as “other” and one as more than

Inclusion Criteria

- Undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24
- Attendance at one of 5 identified four-year, private, residential colleges or universities
- Self identifies as a person who smokes cigarettes
- Individual has smoked a cigarette in the past thirty days.

Audience Segmentation Questions for Consideration

- What kind of colleges should be included in the sample?
 - ▶ 2-year or 4-year
 - ▶ Commuter or Residential
 - ▶ Private or Public
- Should undergraduate and graduate students be included in the sample?
- Should groups be mixed race?
- Should groups be mixed institution-type?
- Should groups be mixed gender?

one racial/ethnic category. Therefore, the findings from this study are reported by institution only, not by race.

The project leaders assumed that graduate students have a qualitatively different experience than undergraduate students. For example, graduate students are less likely to live on campus and socialize with groups of undergraduate students. In addition, the current college attendance of most graduate students is unlikely to be their first experience living away from

home. To reduce the possibility of these factors influencing the analysis and interpretation of the focus group results, eligibility was limited to undergraduate students.

For this study, a smoker was defined as a person who states that he or she smokes cigarettes and that he or she has smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days. This definition is consistent with the definition of current smoking used for adolescents in the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the National Youth Tobacco Survey.⁷ Because the focus of this study is on cigarette smoking behavior, individuals who did not smoke cigarettes but smoked other tobacco products were excluded. However, those who smoked cigarettes and other tobacco products were eligible to participate.

Definition of a “Smoker”

A smoker is defined as a person who states he/she smokes cigarettes and states he/she has smoked a cigarette in the past thirty days.

⁷Note this definition differs from the manner in which many adult surveys measure current smoking, which is having smoked 100 cigarettes in a lifetime.

A visual representation of the segmentation scheme for the college young adult smokers groups, as it was originally planned, is presented below in Table 1.

**Table 1.
Planned Segmentation Scheme**

		Institution	
		Students from HBCUs	Students from Non-HBCU
Gender	Male	2 groups	2 groups
	Female	2 groups	2 groups

Recruitment

Based on the above criteria, focus group participants were recruited on their respective campuses by four ORC Macro staff members. Teams of two staff members used a screening questionnaire, developed by OSH and ORC Macro staff, to identify participants who met the eligibility criteria. A copy of the screener is available in Appendix B.

Potential participants were approached by an ORC Macro staff person in various places on campus. To minimize the possibility of individuals giving false information in order to participate in the group, ORC Macro staff members did not recruit anyone who approached them. The staff members also made a concerted effort to approach individuals who were alone, in order to minimize the recruitment of people who knew each other to the same group. To ensure participation of between six and nine participants per group, ORC Macro staff members attempted to recruit 15 individuals per group. This goal was met for all groups, except HBCU female smokers.

In comparison to the other groups, it was much more difficult to find female HBCU students who stated they smoked cigarettes. Twelve participants were recruited for the first scheduled group and seven for the second scheduled group, far below the target of 15. Although numerous phone calls and e-mails were sent to encourage participants to come to the second group, only one person arrived. An in-depth interview with this participant was conducted (after explaining the change in format and securing her informed consent). A third group was subsequently scheduled and held several months later. To ensure sufficient numbers enough participants, a team of three ORC Macro staff members spent approximately 45–50 hours recruiting on HBCU campuses for participants for this additional group only. Despite these efforts, the team was only able to recruit nine participants.

For all of the groups, each person recruited received a flyer (Appendix C) briefly describing the purpose of the discussion and listing the day, date, time, and location, as well as directions to the focus group. Participants were also sent a confirmation e-mail the day after they were recruited, a reminder e-mail 3 to 5 days before the group’s meeting, and a reminder telephone call one day prior to the scheduled group meeting. Except for the additional HBCU female group, all participants received a \$50 incentive for participating in this project as well as \$3 for transportation reimbursement. To avoid a large number of no-shows for the additional HBCU female smokers group, ORC Macro staff called each of these participants every day for 3 days

prior to the groups and increased their incentive by \$15, for a total of \$65. As a result, six of the nine recruits showed up for the group's meeting.

To deter late arrivals to all of the groups, participants arriving at the facility at least 15 minutes prior to their scheduled focus group were entered into an early bird raffle for a cash prize of \$25.00 cash.

Table 2.
Recruitment Statistics for College Focus Groups

	Non-HBCU		HBCU	
	Males 2 groups 7, 7	Females 2 groups 7, 9	Males 2 groups 7, 9	Females 3 groups* 8, 1, 6
Total number screened for each set of groups	75	84	134	581
Number who agreed to participate	27	29	29	28
Number eligible/ Total number screened in %	(36%)	(35%)	(22%)	(5%)
Number who were either ineligible or did not agree to participate	48	55	105	553
Number of non-participants/ Total number screened in %	(64%)	(65%)	(78%)	(95%)
Reasons for non-participation:				
Don't smoke cigarettes	34	49	92	532
No smoking in past 30 days	1	0	5	6
Not an undergraduate	3	3	0	9
Time conflict	10	2	3	3
Not interested	0	1	5	3

* Only 2 female HBCU groups were actually held. Although in total 28 individuals were recruited, eight individuals showed for the first group and only one person showed for the second group. This individual agreed to a one-on-one in-depth interview. Nine people were recruited for the third group, and 6 of these recruits showed for the group.

Conduct of Focus Groups

On April 4, 5, 10, and 11, and October 11, 2001, the focus groups were conducted in a professional focus group facility equipped with one-way mirrors, observer viewing rooms, a client waiting area, and audiotape equipment. The facility was easily accessible by public transportation, which was particularly important for students without cars. Each focus group discussion was guided by a skilled moderator who had training in moderating focus groups and extensive experience in applying this technique. Each moderator was of similar racial background to that of the majority of participants in their group.

Participants completed a brief information sheet prior to the start of each group, which allowed the moderator to avoid asking "yes or no" questions, which would not be appropriate in a focus group setting, while also providing information about the smoking behaviors of all participants. A copy of the information sheet is provided in Appendix D.

Seven to nine students participated in each group and each discussion lasted approximately 2 hours. The moderator read aloud the informed consent form prior to the start of each group. Each participant signed the form before beginning the discussion. A copy of the informed consent form is available in Appendix E. An ORC Macro staff person took notes in the observation room and audiotaped each group's discussion.

Data Analysis

Transcribed audiotapes were used to conduct a content analysis. Two team members independently identified, labeled, and categorized the data so that primary patterns could be detected. These patterns were then further examined to determine if certain themes emerged that were either articulated directly by participants or identified by the study team.

The ORC Macro team used the transcripts and handwritten notes taken of the groups' discussions to identify patterns or themes that were clearly and frequently expressed within each group, as well as those that were more subtle or less often voiced. The team also took into consideration ideas or thoughts that were voiced but not necessarily repeated frequently by others in the groups. Every attempt was made to ensure that all comments and insights are reported here in an accurate context. The team members met several times during these processes to compare findings and discuss differences and similarities in the interpretation of the data. The level of agreement among team members was high and they were usually able to reach agreement on different interpretations after discussion and reexamination of the transcripts. Instead of a qualitative software package, a manual coding system was used to assist in this analysis.

The following is an example of the approach used to analyze the data. The college smokers groups discussed the relationships between cigarette smoking and the use of other substances, such as marijuana and alcohol. To understand the dynamics of this relationship and whether or not it differed across the groups, a coding category called "weed, alcohol, and cigarettes" was created to include all references to the relationship between marijuana, alcohol, and cigarettes. Once these references for each group were compared, it became apparent that non-HBCU groups and the HBCU females were far more likely to discuss the relationship between alcohol and cigarettes than HBCU males, who focused more often on marijuana and cigarettes.

When a logical analysis was employed to probe more deeply into these relationships, the team found that, although both marijuana and alcohol were described as "going hand in hand" with cigarette smoking, the nature of these relationships was different. Cigarettes appear to function more as a companion to alcohol consumption, especially when students are drinking in clubs or bars. Smoking cigarettes not only relieves anxiety in these social settings by giving a person something to do with their hands, but in the non-HBCU groups, cigarette smoking also serves as an entree to, and facilitator of, conversation with members of the opposite sex. In the context of marijuana use, cigarette smoking appears to function more as a pharmacological "booster" of the high induced by smoking marijuana. In addition, HBCU males stated that smoking cigarettes was often a substitute for smoking marijuana.

III. Description of Participants (from the prediscussion information sheets)

In total, 60 students—16 male HBCU students, 14 female HBCU students, 14 male non-HBCU students, and 16 female non-HBCU students—participated in the groups. As expected, the broad definition of smoker used resulted in a mix of social, occasional, and regular smokers as well as light, moderate, and heavy smokers. It was clear in the focus groups that the experiences, motivations, beliefs, and attitudes of students who identified themselves as social smokers differed from those of students who considered themselves to be regular smokers. Differences also existed between individuals who smoked relatively few cigarettes per day and those who smoked half a pack or more per day. However, because the unit of analysis in focus group research is the group and not the individuals within the group, and the groups were not segmented according to the intensity or frequency of smoking behavior, only general themes and patterns that emerged across the groups with respect to smoking behavior and participants' attitude or beliefs can be reported.

The average age of all participants was 20 years. HBCU students reported smoking their first cigarette later than non-HBCU students, with seven HBCU students beginning in college in comparison to four non-HBCU students. (See Appendix F for a description of participant demographics and smoking habits.)

IV. Findings

The major themes emerging from the focus groups are presented below. Where appropriate, differences by institution and gender are also discussed.

Who Is a Typical Smoker?

In all groups, respondents stated there was no such thing as “a typical smoker” on their respective campuses. Participants stated that all types of people smoke cigarettes, including people whom others assume do not smoke, based on their appearance, athletic endeavors, or academic majors. In all groups, but particularly in the non-HBCU groups, many of these “unlikely” smokers were referred to as social smokers who smoke only when they are hanging out on weekends and drinking with their friends in clubs, bars or other social settings. This perception was shared by the HBCU students; however, for male HBCU students in particular, social smoking was also associated with marijuana use. Social smokers were not thought of as “real smokers” by most participants across all groups. As one male HBCU participant stated, *“The real distinction is between a smoker and a real smoker. If you don't buy a pack, you're not a real smoker.”*

When the moderator probed and asked specifically whether freshmen versus seniors or students with certain types of majors were more likely to smoke cigarettes, across all groups, participants believed that freshmen were more likely to smoke than seniors. They attributed this to several factors, including lack of parental supervision, rebellion, and increased access.

“Another thing I noticed is [that] a lot of freshmen smoke. Not because they used to smoke, [but because] they're away from the house and they see other people doing it, so they just kind of pick up on it.”

(HBCU male smoker)

One female HBCU group mentioned that smokers usually have physical characteristics that result from smoking, such as yellow teeth, dark lips, darker complexion, and a lingering cigarette odor. This group also characterized young women who appear “thuggish” as smokers; however, the group also pointed out that it is often difficult to tell a smoker by appearance, unless they know the person. Several of the participants stated that people are often surprised to learn that they smoke.

“If I know them, I wouldn’t think that they smoked, but if I see a girl that looks thuggish, then I will go, ‘[H]ey, do you got a Newport®?’ Something like that.”
(HBCU female smoker)

“A lot of people tell me I look like I don’t smoke, because I’m too pretty. I am too pretty to smoke. I know that, but I just smoke.”
(HBCU female smoker)

Participants in male and female non-HBCU groups agreed that students majoring in business were more likely to smoke. The female HBCU groups appeared to have the most difficulty responding to the question. In one female HBCU group, this question sparked a conversation about how negatively smokers are treated on their respective campuses.

“I am tired of people staring at me and stuff. Or like the RAs [residential assistants], they will just sit there. Some RA came up behind me and gave me a lecture about it. I just try going to the strip [an open air, common space between the neighboring HBCU campuses] and hide behind a bush.”
(HBCU female smoker)

“I don’t think it’s, um, a type either. Because I know when I pull out a cigarette on campus, I try to quit pulling out cigarettes on campus because people are like, ‘Oh my God, you smoke.’”
(HBCU female smoker)

In one HBCU male group, the idea of a “typical smoker” was closely linked with whether or not the person smokes marijuana. Despite the close relationship, participants in both the male and female HBCU groups stated that they knew people who drink alcohol or smoke marijuana but do not smoke cigarettes. According to the participants, some of these individuals smoke Black and Mild cigars instead of cigarettes but others do not use any tobacco products at all.

“At [this college], there are, like, weed smokers, you’ve got cigarette smokers... All types of people smoke.”
(HBCU Male Smoker)

How Did the First Cigarette Smoking Experience Occur?

Respondents were asked to describe the first time they smoked a cigarette and what motivated them to do so. Each participant was given the opportunity to respond individually to the question. In each group, a variety of scenarios were described, including being in the company of older peers, siblings, and family members, as well as being alone. Most participants were

younger than 18 years when they tried their first cigarette, although almost every group had at least one participant who started smoking in college.

“I guess I was, like, in middle school too. And, um, something like N_____’s situation, both my parents smoked and, um, I just went in my mom’s drawer and took one of her cigarettes out. And I was thinking, okay, maybe she counts them. And she knows how many are here, or whatever, but I took it and I went in the bathroom and I smoked. And I later got in trouble for it. But, um, I tried to lie and say I didn’t do it. You know, all this kind of stuff. I don’t think, like after I did that it wasn’t a routine thing. I, like, did it then just to try it out. And then, like, when I got in high school, probably like junior or senior of high school, I started smoking again.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“It was in eighth grade and no one was home and my grandpa was a smoker and I always thought he was cool, so I just took a cigarette of his and went to the bathroom. I thought it was pretty cool.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I think I was 14 years old. My father used to work nights. So my brother and I would sit in the living room when he smoked cigarettes. And he gave me one, and told me to go ahead and smoke it. So I remember smoking it. And I remember getting this big buzz. I smoked the whole thing. And I guess I inhaled it right because I was high. And it was off and on. I would smoke every once in a while. But I didn’t really start buying packs and smoking regularly until I was about 18.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“In ninth grade, I sneaked out of the house with my sister, just went to the Waffle House, like with the losers, and she smoked and so she was, like, ‘Do you want to try it?’ And I was like, I did inhale it and it sucked and the next day I had another and it was a lot better. And it started from that.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I started smoking when I was 15 and my boyfriend smoked and I was trying to get him to quit and I was like every cigarette you smoke, I’m going to smoke one. And he was like no, no, no. Everyone, all of his friends smoked and it was like the cool thing because they were a lot older and I just got hooked.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“The first time I smoked, I was with a friend. It was in the eighth grade, probably around [age] 13. It was around springtime. And he had gotten one from his sister. It was a brown cigarette called chocolates. He said he had a chocolate. I asked what’s that? Let’s say the school is here and the gym is right here. The office where all the secretaries were is right [here]. And we were right in the alley. It was stupid. It was real stupid smoking right there. And from then on, we’d just [be] smoking. It wasn’t long before I started getting packs and stuff like that. I’d try different brands.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I had my first cigarette when I came to college. And I got stuck. I would do anything to not be where I am right now.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I was actually with my cousin; his father, my uncle, was an avid cigarette smoker and he was in sixth grade and I was in fourth grade. And we just went to a restaurant and were hanging out with a bunch of his friends, they were all smoking cigarettes and I smoked a cigarette with them and I ended up smoking quite a few cigarettes that night.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

In the non-HBCU male groups and one male HBCU group, participants spoke of finding discarded cigarette butts and smoking them with either a friend or by themselves.

“It was probably [a] child friend of mine, we were just hanging out in a parking lot and there was a little ledge around the parking lot and there was, like, half a cigarette and we picked it up and we started lighting it. I don’t know if it was his first time, but he was trying to act like he was real cool and he picked it up and he was into more stuff than I was and then he passed it to me. We just went back and forth.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I know one of my first, like, I didn’t start smoking then, but the first time I ever had a cigarette was, I found a cigarette on the street. And I, like, kept it. And then later that day, I was at home and I snuck out, like, onto my roof on the back and smoked it out there and that was, like, the first time I ever had a cigarette.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I have a similar story. I just found one in the locker room in eighth grade, and just held onto it and later that evening, got curious and opened my window in my bedroom and just smoked it.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

In two of the HBCU male and female groups, several participants described their first smoking experience in the context of being strongly opposed to cigarette smoking prior to that experience.

“I smoked my first cigarette, I was, like, in tenth grade. My friend, he smoked, Marlboro[®], he started smoking. I was, like, let me hit that. My father, he’s, like, a heavy smoker and I never liked smoke, you know what I’m saying. I would say, ‘You need to quit the shit.’ I smoked it, and it didn’t do anything for me and it still doesn’t. We’re the type of smoker that smokes a cigarette because [of] the way we look, or, like at a party. Sometimes you’ll be having a drink and sometimes I like a cigarette.”

(HBCU Male Smoker)

“The first time I ever had a cigarette, um, I was probably in grade school, maybe sixth grade or something, I’m not really sure. And me and a girl who lived on my block, her name was D _____. She was smoking cigarettes and I took a pull at her

cigarette, and coughed up a lung. And I thought it was the nastiest thing, I thought it was so disgusting and hideous. I had no idea why people smoked. Because, I remember when I was a small child, my mom would smoke and it would make me, like, nauseous, so she would throw the cigarettes away. And then she wouldn't, I would catch her smoking and I would be crying and, 'You're gonna get cancer' and 'What about commercials?' And I would flush her cigarettes down the toilet and crush them up. So why I smoke now, I have no idea. I was very dramatic about smoking, like, when I was small."

(HBCU female smoker)

Although most participants across all groups stated that they did not enjoy their first smoking experience, many of them continued to smoke until they became accustomed to the taste and learned how to inhale. For these participants, their initial dislike did not serve as a long-term deterrent.

Why Start Smoking Cigarettes?

When participants were asked to explain why they decided to smoke their first cigarette, the most common reasons given across all groups were:

- Curiosity
- Family
- Peers
- Rebellion
- Drugs, alcohol and other tobacco products

Curiosity

Participants in all groups frequently mentioned wanting to know “what it was like to smoke.” In all groups, several participants stated that they were curious about why people, either friends or relatives, liked to smoke and wanted to experience it for themselves. For participants in the male HBCU and non-HBCU groups, this curiosity centered around the purported “buzz” or momentary high associated with smoking cigarettes. Only one female HBCU participant stated that she started smoking to experience the buzz.

“The first time I remember I actually smoked a cigarette was when I was [in] about seventh grade [with some] friends. Some of them had already smoked prior to that occasion but that was the first time I smoked a cigarette. We were outside somewhere, [and] basically, I just wanted to see what the buzz was like. I remember smoking a cigarette and getting this huge buzz. And that was the first time. I think that's why I started smoking initially.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I just wanted to see what it was like. I see people smoking, they seem to like it, so. It wasn’t pressure at all, at least for me.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Family

In almost every group, participants stated that exposure to smokers while growing up was an influence on their decision to smoke a cigarette for the first time. This influence was exerted in several ways. For instance, many participants had either tried their first cigarette with a family member who was a smoker, or had stolen their first cigarette from a family member. Male HBCU and non-HBCU students described situations where they smoked their first cigarette with an older male relative, usually a brother, cousin, or uncle. Female HBCU and non-HBCU students reported that they were with an older sister or had stolen their first cigarette from their mother.

“I was about 8 years old. My mother’s boyfriend smoked. I took a cigarette out of one of his packs, went behind the house, lit it up.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“...about sixth grade, with my brother. They smoked weed and stuff so I tried to be cool...We started growing up and getting more mature, like, it’s just like something you do, you know. Especially when you smoke weed or whatever...”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Oh, oh yeah. My situation’s similar to M_____’s. My sister was in college and I was 12, I think, and I was just like talking to her one weekend and I was, like, I want to smoke. I just want to see what it’s like because I’d rather have my sister there because I knew she smoked. I was, like, I’d rather have my sister than then try to steal some cigarettes or something. And then so we went out to, she drove me out to like this creek... I had my first cigarette and I was, like, it’s not bad. I mean, I probably inhaled about half of it because I didn’t know how, but then, you know, she gave me the rest of her pack and then after that I don’t really remember when I haven’t had a pack of cigarettes.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Many participants felt that simply being exposed to smokers in their immediate family throughout their childhood led them to become a smoker by stimulating a desire to emulate behavior, increasing accessibility to cigarettes, or just sparking their curiosity about the taste, effects and general act of smoking.

“...I guess I’ve been smoking since birth. My parents are smokers. Most of my brothers and sisters are smokers. My mother, although she tried to quit, did not quit until I was in uteri [uterus]. So I’ve pretty much been smoking forever. As for actually putting a cigarette to my lips and actually puffing, that was in middle school.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“...[M]y mother and her cousin or whatever, they’re smokers and I watched them. I sort of started because I had seen them smoking.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I was home from middle school and I just wanted to try it. And both of my parents smoked and that was the thing. I guess I was just trying stuff out the first time...”

(HBCU female smoker)

“My parents don’t smoke. Nobody in my house smokes. But, everybody in my family outside of our house smokes, everybody. So, I think that’s where I probably picked it up. But, I started smoking when I was in high school.”

(HBCU female smoker)

Despite this consensus, each group also expressed the opinion that for some individuals, having a family member who smokes can lead to the development of an aversion to smoking.

Peers

Each group described situations in which participants were in the company of peers who smoked and suggested that these situations influenced their decisions to try a cigarette for the first time. Very few participants were willing to label this “peer pressure,” thereby distinguishing between choosing to do something because it is in their peer environment, and being pressured into doing something against their will by the peers in that environment. A more appropriate way to understand this peer influence may be in terms of the respondents’ desire to emulate what they often perceived as “cool” behavior of older friends or relatives.

“I started smoking when I was 15 and my boyfriend smoked and I was trying to get him to quit and I was like, ‘Every cigarette you smoke, I’m going to smoke one.’ He was like, ‘No, no ,no. Every one of his friends smoked and it was, like, the cool thing because they were older and I just got hooked.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“I worked at a car wash in eight grade, and, I don’t know, everyone smoked and I didn’t want to look like an idiot. So I went home and smoked a cigarette by myself.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“You see people smoking and you want to try it to. It wasn’t a real peer pressure.... It wasn’t like all my friends were always pushing them on me.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Women in the non-HBCU groups described situations in which their peers actively tried to discourage them from smoking the first time, even though their peers were smokers. The respondents stated their peers were upset with them; however, they felt it was their personal choice whether or not to smoke.

“I was, like, well I’ll try it and [my friends] were all, like, ‘No, you never smoked, you don’t smoke and you’re against it.’ I was like, ‘You know what, don’t argue with me, I want one.’ So I did and I just kept on going.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Rebellion

In all groups—but particularly in the non-HBCU female and HBCU male groups—rebellion was mentioned as a reason for smoking initiation. Respondents stated that they were attracted by the idea of “getting away with” a behavior reserved for, and often forbidden by, parents or other adults.

Smoking cigarettes, particularly in one female non-HBCU group, was considered a “safer way” for young persons to rebel, express their individuality, and claim their right to choose what they want to do with their lives, even if the consequences are negative.

“It’s like an expression of your opinion.”

“Yeah, the fact that you can get away with it.”

“Individuality.”

“It’s not like doing drugs. It’s not stealing something.”

“It’s like passive-aggressive rebellion.”

“It’s not like you’re going to go to jail or rehab center.”

(College Non-HBCU female smokers)

In all of the groups, rebellion was specifically cited as a reason why students, particularly freshmen, begin smoking in college. These students are away from home and parental supervision, and in a relatively “safe” environment that gives them time and freedom to experiment. For these students, the issue may be less one of classic rebellion than of the need to exercise autonomy and adjust themselves to their new freedom. In addition, many college students spend a great deal of time socializing in settings where cigarette smoking is common, such as clubs or bars. This increased accessibility and acceptability were also reasons cited for young adults to begin smoking while in college.

Drugs, Alcohol and Other Tobacco Products

In an unexpected finding, at least one participant in all the groups reported using marijuana, alcohol, or other tobacco products prior to smoking their first cigarette. In the HBCU groups, participants reported that some people start smoking cigarettes as a way to mask the smell of marijuana. These groups also reported that some people choose to smoke cigarettes for the first time as a way to intensify or “boost” the high they feel from marijuana.

“A lot of times, people start smoking to cover up the weed.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I think probably the first time I smoked a cigarette was because, to be honest, I only smoked cigarettes because I smoked weed.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I was in my freshman year in college. [R]ight before I came to college I started smoking Black and Milds and bidis because they give you a really big buzz. And I didn’t have any, I remember whenever I didn’t have a black or a bidi to smoke, a friend said, ‘Smoke a cigarette man, here you go.’ I said. ‘I don’t want a cigarette.’ And eventually I just took one. And I went from there, you know, eventually I got to the point that I preferred a cigarette over the other products, which I don’t even smoke anymore.”

(HBCU Male Smoker)

Participants in the male and female HBCU groups were also more likely to report that they smoked their first cigarette as a substitute for another tobacco product, usually Black and Milds, a small cigar or bidis⁸. One male HBCU participant reported smoking a brown cigarette called “chocolates.” In both the male and female HBCU groups, participants stated that Black and Milds, also referred to as “Blacks,” were especially popular with male HBCU students. A few HBCU female smokers expressed a preference for the taste and smell of Black and Milds; however, most the HBCU female smokers agreed that most cigarette smokers did not like either the taste or smell of Black and Milds and would probably smoke them occasionally in social settings.

“Everybody and their mother smokes Black and Milds at [my college]”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Yeah, like I ain’t in a social environment with the people who smoke Black and Milds. I know all the cigarette smokers. So, but everywhere you turn, you have somebody smoking a Black and Mild.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I didn’t start off with cigarettes, actually. I started on Black and Milds. And, um, my cousin was smoking. I just, I liked the smell. I just, I, for some reason, liked the Black and Milds smell. It just smelled so good to me. And, um, yeah and I started off, actually, with like, the cherry kind, or whatever. And started off [smoking cigarettes] at like, 15. I did one and it was yuck. It was, it just tasted nasty, but then, like, when I got [to] high school, like my junior, senior year, I started buying them and smoking them more regularly. I didn’t like cigarettes, though. I smoked them off and on for, like, it had to be, like, until I was 17.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I started smoking Black and Milds during my senior prom. And then I started smoking bidis. When you go from bidis down to cigarettes, you feel like you are helping yourself.”

(HBCU male smoker)

In both HBCU and non-HBCU groups, several participants reported trying their first cigarette when they were consuming alcohol. In fact, for those students who reported initiating cigarette

⁸Bidis are small brown cigarettes, often flavored, consisting of tobacco that is hand rolled in tendu or temburni leaf and tied with a string at one end. They are produced in India and southeast Asian countries and usually imported from India. For more information, see the September 17, 1999 MMWR, “Bid Use Among Urban Youth-Massachusetts” March-April 1999.

smoking in college, prior alcohol consumption was a major factor in their decision to begin and continue smoking.

“I started smoking when I started drinking. Like, I would smoke when I would drink and then it became a routine thing, during the weekdays or whatever.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“With alcohol and when people go out at night, like I know somebody, like my roommate for example, she never smokes, but when she goes out and drinks she’s like ‘Yeah, I like it. It increases my drunkenness or it just, like, like, if I don’t like the taste of alcohol, it will mask the taste and, like, so many people smoke when they drink alcohol.’”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Why Continue to Smoke Cigarettes?

A series of questions was asked to help our understand why young adults continue smoking while they are in college. The most common reasons cited across all groups are provided in this section, and where appropriate, any differences that emerged between institutions and gender are highlighted. These reasons are:

- Stress and anxiety
- Being in college
- Alcohol and marijuana use
- Habit or routine
- Socializing and having friends who smoke
- Addiction
- Boredom
- Oral fixation
- Cheaper and easier in Georgia
- Curb hunger or stimulate weight loss

Stress and Anxiety

The most commonly reported reason for continuing to smoke was stress. However, the source and manifestation of stress differed across the groups. But in all the groups, cigarette smoking was described as a coping mechanism for handling stress related to specific situations, such as an upcoming exam or a term paper.

“But now that I am in college, when I get stressed, I smoke. I’m not, like, a regular smoker. I don’t always have cigarettes, but around exam times and stuff like that, I definitely fall into the groove.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“If I’m feeling the slightest bit of anxiety or tension, I’m just, like, I want a cigarette to feel better about it.”

(Non-HBCU Female Smoker)

“If you’re writing a paper, you’re going to smoke.”

(HBCU Male Smoker)

Smoking a cigarette physically calmed the students down while also allowing them “to take a break” from the stressful situation and regroup their thoughts. Many participants described smoking a cigarette as their “time alone,” or their moment of solitude to use for reflection or planning.

“Instead of sitting down and meditating, it’s, like, go have a cigarette and regroup.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

For some, particularly in one HBCU female group, stress was induced less by individual situations than by a constellation, and often convergence, of several situations that made the stress appear continual, thus increasing the need to smoke as a coping mechanism. Participants in the female HBCU groups were more likely to mention major personal tragedies, such as the death of a boyfriend or the serious illness of a family member, as a reason why they began and continued smoking cigarettes.

“Everything’s going well and all of a sudden, something that’s, like, out of your control, something that you wish you could have stopped, or you wish you had the chance to stop [happens]... so you’re just, like, forget it, and just start smoking.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“...especially with college students. I mean, it’s, like, always something wrong and you can’t go a whole week without nothing going wrong.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“The amount of things that’s going on at once—stress, school, stress, being out here by yourself, you know what I’m saying? Trying to take care of yourself, it’s a lot of things at once. You know what I’m saying, it’s not like cigarettes make it better but they don’t hurt.”

(HBCU male smoker)

In all of the non-HBCU groups, smoking cigarettes was also discussed as a mechanism to alleviate anxiety associated with social situations, particularly with the opposite sex. According to respondents, a person will smoke a cigarette to feel more comfortable sitting at a bar or engaging in conversation with a person they have just met because it gives them “something to do with their hands.” This topic was raised only once in a female HBCU group and did not come up at all in the other HBCU groups.

“I don’t know, I just feel like it’s easier to pick up girls. You have something to do, you’re not just standing there.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“If you’re smoking a cigarette and a girl comes up to you, like, ‘You got another one?’ ‘Of course.’ It’s a social thing and you start talking, you’ve got that connection.”

(Non-HBCU Male Smoker)

Being in College

In all groups, but particularly in the non-HBCU groups, being in college was mentioned as a major reason why participants continued to smoke cigarettes. College offers the freedom of being away from parental supervision, and increases the opportunities for students to be in the presence of other smokers at school and in social settings, such as bars and clubs. Many participants referred to college as a “time to socialize” and said that smoking cigarettes is often part of this socializing.

“I think smoking is also a very social thing and college is the time, like, when you have the most socialization going on. I don’t think that’s an avoidable fact. Like, if you’re in front of the library, if you’re in front of [a major building on campus], if you’re in front of anywhere, you can sit and hang and have a cigarette and it’s fun, like.”

(Non-HBCU Female Smoker)

“Well, I feel that it’s the environment conducive to smoking. There’s no parents, there’s more stress and I don’t know, a lot of time I smoke at a party just to occupy myself.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Within the college environment, smoking cigarettes is also viewed as a way to “act like an adult” by exercising autonomy and personal choice. For instance, one participant in a non-HBCU female group described college as a time when young people are not quite sure of their adult status. As a result, they are trying to understand who they are and how best to handle the new responsibilities that go along with this new, “not-quite-yet-adult” status. Smoking cigarettes functions simultaneously as an expression of their right to choose and as a tool to help them cope with academic and social pressure they experience as college students.

“Here, there’s no one to, like, watch me or penalize me for smoking.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“...First year you don’t have to worry like your parents smelling smoke on you and stuff...There’s something nice and free about just being able to sit and have a cigarette...”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“I shouldn’t have anyone telling me when and how I can smoke because I am a grown woman in college. I’m not at home anymore, just like with the curfews.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“Being reckless and carefree, it’s like we are drawn to things that make us cool, that we are not trying to conform to what makes us good people, that we are not really respected as adults yet anyway and we are not children anymore.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

The non-HBCU male and female groups also described situations in which smoking cigarettes was a way to meet people and develop platonic and romantic relationships while in college. Since smoking is prohibited inside many of the buildings on campus, students tend to congregate in designated areas to smoke. During this time, conversations ensue and friendships develop. For these participants, smoking functions as both an entree to, and a facilitator of, conversation. Despite the fact that many HBCU participants stated that they had friends who smoke cigarettes, they did not discuss or describe situations, in which they met their friends via smoking, as did the non-HBCU groups. This may be explained by the HBCU participants’ accounts of the stigma associated with smoking on HBCU campuses.

“Yeah, my freshman year, I met a lot of people just because people that smoked. We would smoke in the same place outside our dorm.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“I tried it in high school and I didn’t like it. So then I got to college and probably my first week in school, my roommate and I just started a pack of cigarettes and that’s how we became best friends. And then I just kind of picked it up.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

The idea of college as a safe haven in which to experiment with cigarette smoking without fear of addiction surfaced strongly when non-HBCU participants were asked if they would be smoking in 5 years. Many non-HBCU participants viewed their current cigarette smoking as a natural and acceptable response to the academic and social pressures they face in college. For them, smoking cigarettes is a temporary behavior. As a result, after they graduate, they expect to either no longer have the desire to smoke or to be able to control it. This belief appears to be supported by many participants’ perception that the addictive nature of cigarettes is largely “mental” in origin and can be overcome with the right amount of willpower and determination.

“I’ve been smoking... and enjoying it for 3 years now and I’ve quit a number of times for, like, 3 or 4 months at a time and not had any cigarettes, like, as purely proof to myself that I’m not addicted to it and I don’t need it. In my head, I have this 4-year window in college pretty much to smoke. Like, that’s how I see it in my head. And then after college, like, I’m not going to smoke. Like, I just won’t do it. Like, I just know I won’t.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“...a lot of things I do right now are kind of time limited within a few years. After college, once I start working, I’ll have to, certain things are going to have to change.”

(Non-HBCU Male Smoker)

“I don’t think I am physically addicted; it’s just, like, a product of the environment.”

(Non-HBCU Male Smoker)

Many non-HBCU participants stated that once they graduate from college, smoking cigarettes will no longer fit into their lifestyles because they will be entering the professional working world where cigarette smoking could be perceived as a sign of weakness. They also explained that as working professionals, they will have far less time for social activities such as parties and bars. As a result, they will be drinking less and smoking less.

“[Smokers] just feel that it is more normal in college than in the business world. You go into the real world, you don’t want to [smoke]. But if I walk into class and I smell like smoke, you know there’s nothing they will do.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Participants in both the non-HBCU male and female groups also mentioned that they would be married and possibly have children in 5 years and they would not want to smoke cigarettes around their children. One non-HBCU female participant stated that she would be “too poor” to smoke because her current smoking habit was supported primarily by her parents. After graduation, she would have sole financial responsibility for her upkeep and she did not think she would be able to afford to smoke cigarettes in 5 years.

Despite this consensus across the non-HBCU groups, several male and female non-HBCU students stated that they would be smoking in 5 years, despite their desire not to. These participants described themselves as addicted to cigarette smoking and had previously tried and failed to quit numerous times. In addition, several male and female non-HBCU participants believed they had no need to quit because they did not currently smoke large numbers of cigarettes.

Confidence in their ability to quit smoking cigarettes was not as strong in HBCU students. Both HBCU men and women were far more likely to state that they definitely would be smoking in 5 years or their decision to continue depended upon the level of stress that they experienced or the amount of socializing in which they engaged. Many of the HBCU participants stated that they would probably continue smoking cigarettes because, either they would still be in school pursuing graduate degrees, enter stressful professions such as law, or would still be socializing in situations that encourage cigarette smoking. For these participants, cigarette smoking is “something [they] can depend on” to calm them down and relieve stress.

“It depends. It really depends on the stress factor, how much stress I have in my life and how I handle my stress.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I’m going to be honest and I think I’ll still be smoking. I’m very confident and I know I’ll become a lawyer, so the stress will still be there. It doesn’t matter if I have kids, I know they’ll probably get on my nerves. I’ll probably be someone who smokes for a very long time. As I get older, the stress gets worse and worse. I could use other ways to take it out, but sometimes I work out or whatever, but sometimes the facility is closed. And being a freshman and not having a car to go anywhere, I have to deal with it in other ways. And that’s my release point, right there, because I have nothing better to do. I probably will smoke for a real long time and a lot more often.”

(HBCU female smoker)

The strong association between alcohol and marijuana use and cigarette smoking made it particularly difficult for many male HBCU students to envision themselves in situations where they would drink alcohol or smoke marijuana and not smoke cigarettes. Furthermore, several participants in both the male and female HBCU groups stated that they had no desire to stop smoking cigarettes because they enjoyed smoking.

“I’d like to say no. I keep telling myself I’m gonna quit when I graduate. But, the truth of the matter is, I don’t really know that. And I’m quite fond of my cigarettes right now. I really enjoy the inhaling of the smoke, the way the butt feels to your lips, that first drag. It’s, like, what I do when I get up in the morning. You use the bathroom, you smoke a cigarette, then you get ready for your day. I don’t have breakfast, but I have a cigarette. So, it depends on my lifestyle, the stress, whether I’m doing the night life thing or the daylight thing. I don’t really know.”

(HBCU female smoker)

Despite their feelings of uncertainty, several male and female HBCU participants stated that they would stop smoking cigarettes if they had children or were married. These participants did not want to expose their children to secondhand smoke.

“I don’t have no intention of stopping anytime soon. Maybe in 5 years. Maybe the year after that, because I do want to have kids. And I know I’m going to stop smoking when I have kids, hopefully. But my friend was saying and I was telling him like, ‘Yeah, I’m going to stop smoking when I have kids.’ And he was like, ‘What does that mean? Just because you have kids you’re going to stop smoking.’ He was, like, ‘Watch when they get older and they start stressing you out. You will go right back to those cigarettes, probably.’ So I don’t know, but hopefully I’m going to stop.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I was gonna say the exact same thing that she said. It depends, on what I’m doing in 5 years. Like, if I’m married with children, I really don’t see myself smoking. But if I’m single, going to work in the afternoons, coming home, going to bed, probably so.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“If I ever get pregnant I would stop, but if I chose to breast [feed], I would stop on queue, because that’s not my right to make my baby addicted to cigarettes. It could be premature with any kind of birth defect because of me and I don’t want to do that. I’ve seen people actually go outside to smoke and [be] 6 months pregnant. You know I totally disagree with that. Because you’re not just messing up your life or hurting [yourself]. You’re putting it in the baby too.”

(HBCU female smoker)

For the few HBCU participants who said that they would definitely not be smoking in 5 years, one of the most common reasons offered was health concerns. Many of these participants had family members with smoking-related illnesses or conditions aggravated by smoking. Some participants also stated that smoking cigarettes in 5 years would be a sign of personal and spiritual weakness. This sentiment was expressed particularly strongly in one female HBCU

group, in which one participant stated that using cigarettes as a coping mechanism for stress implied that she did not “trust the Lord enough” to improve her situation or help her be strong enough to quit. She believed that her faith in God should be strong enough to help her cope with any problems; therefore cigarettes would be unnecessary. Several other participants agreed with her assessment.

In one HBCU male group, several participants discussed how smoking cigarettes would not fit their future lifestyle and profession.

“I was just thinking of the type of life I want to lead. I mean I want to be a teacher so I know that eventually I’m going to have to stop smoking or I should. I shouldn’t smoke weed and be a teacher. I know that if I stop smoking weed, I’m going to stop smoking cigarettes too.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Alcohol and Marijuana Use

The discussion guide developed for these focus groups did not ask any specific questions about alcohol or marijuana use; however, the two substances were frequently mentioned in all of the groups. In every group, respondents agreed that alcohol and cigarettes often “go hand in hand,” and in every group, at least some of the participants reported that their cigarette consumption doubled or nearly doubled when they drank alcohol.

“...When I drink I know I need a pack of cigarettes, ‘cause I’m just gonna want to smoke.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“It’s [alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking] like the yin and the yang.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I like drinking, but I don’t love the taste of alcohol, so like I’ll take a sip, then I’ll take a drag of a cigarette, and it will, like, mask the taste.”

(Non-HBCU Female Smoker)

“It takes me, if I’m just alone, it takes me a week to get through a pack. If I’m in a club, I will smoke, like, five or six cigarettes in a 3-hour period of time.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I don’t know anybody who just smokes cigarettes. Usually, cigarettes are kind of like that side dish drug. Your main course is something to drink, and cigarettes serve as the side dish. It’s like a fry and a burger.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Well on the regular, like, school day, like, probably, like, five, just like, you know, yeah, I’d say like five a day. I mean last year it was worse, because I could smoke in my room, so I’d smoke like a pack a day, or half a pack a day. But yeah, on the weekends, when I’m out doing stuff, like drinking or whatever, I could go through, like, four packs on the weekend and it wouldn’t be, like, a big thing.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Both the male and female HBCU groups placed much more emphasis on the relationship between marijuana and cigarette smoking than the non-HBCU groups. In one of the male HBCU groups, the moderator had to repeatedly remind the participants that when she said the words “smoke” or “smoking,” she was referring to cigarettes, not marijuana. The participants explained that the two were so interlinked, that they couldn’t not really talk about one without the other. For instance, cigarettes, particularly menthol cigarettes, were primarily, and in some cases initially, used as a means to intensify or “boost” the high associated with marijuana. Participants also stated that they smoked cigarettes as a substitute for marijuana.

“They always give me a buzz. I think I smoke cigarettes now because I can’t smoke weed all the time. And you have to have something to supplement it.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I guess if you smoke weed, if you smoke a cigarette after, it boosts your high. I can’t explain it.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“...it’s tough to find a person who smokes marijuana that doesn’t smoke cigarettes, you know... ‘cause the thing is, you know, after you smoke marijuana, it’s like smoking cigarettes doesn’t feel as bad ‘cause it’s not illegal. I mean, you find people who just smoke marijuana. Back when I was growing up, everybody who smoked weed, smoked cigarettes.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Across all groups, participants said that cigarette smoking intensifies the effects of alcohol. Non-HBCU male and female participants tended to characterize the relationship between alcohol and cigarettes differently from HBCU male and female participants. HBCU groups focused on how cigarettes enhance or improve the use of alcohol or marijuana, while non-HBCU groups, described cigarettes as more of a companion to—not an intensifier of or substitute for—alcohol. Instead, the act of smoking cigarettes appears to ease anxiety in social situations where alcohol consumption occurs, by either giving the person “something to do” or providing a reason to initiate conversation.

Both HBCU and non-HBCU groups reported that they would find it very difficult to stop smoking cigarettes if they continued to drink or smoke marijuana, but the two had clearly different views about their futures and their use of these other substances. Participants in the HBCU groups predicted that they would be unwilling or unable to stop smoking marijuana in 5 years, and therefore they saw no reason to quit smoking tobacco either. In contrast, participants in the non-HBCU groups expected to be focused on their careers and families in 5 years, and thus socialize and drink less; therefore, they predicted that they would use less alcohol and marijuana in the future and would probably not be smoking in 5 years. Participants did not discuss smoking cigarettes as a future replacement for alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs.

“I know that if I stop smoking weed, I’m going to stop smoking cigarettes too.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I know that if weed wasn’t around, I wouldn’t smoke cigarettes at all.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“But if you smoke and you drink, you’re not going to quit smoking until you can somehow manage to stop drinking. It’s an impossibility.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Habit and Routine

In every group, participants stated that they continue to smoke because cigarettes are a habit and part of their daily routine, one that many of them enjoy. Many of these participants, regardless of gender or institutional affiliation, did not view this aspect of cigarette smoking as an indicator of addiction. Usually, the conversation was animated as participants fondly related the pleasure they receive from smoking cigarettes at set times throughout the day. Across all groups, participants described how at certain times of the day when they know they will smoke, such as after waking up, having sex, eating, going to the bathroom, or when they are in traffic or between classes. Participants were particularly forthcoming about their reasons for smoking after eating, stating that a cigarette after a good meal helps to complete the meal and aids in their digestion by “helping their food go down.” One participant said that the cigarette was her “dessert.” A similar sentiment was expressed about smoking cigarettes after sex.

“Like, at first, I could never imagine getting up and smoking a cigarette when I first started smoking and now, if I don’t have a cigarette within an hour I get up, I miss it. It’s a routine and a habit.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“It’s hard to tell yourself, no, you don’t want a cigarette when you’re body is like, ‘Yeah, you do want one...’ Especially since you have a daily routine and it’s, like, you wake up, eat, and smoke a cigarette.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“...[w]hen I finish a meal, it’s finished when I smoke a cigarette. Or when I wake up, I know it’s time for a cigarette. Sometimes, that’s what gets me out of bed. It’s like people and their coffee.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

However several participants, particularly in the non-HBCU groups and one male HBCU group, stated that they did not have a daily routine involving cigarettes since they tend to smoke primarily on the weekends or when they are drinking and do not usually purchase cigarettes. These participants tended to distinguish themselves from the other members of their focus groups. During one such discussion, one HBCU male smoker looked around the room and said, “You all are smokers. I’m not really a smoker.”

Socializing and Having Friends Who Smoke

Across all groups, regardless of gender or institutional affiliation, participants stated that being in bars and clubs where everyone smokes, as well as being in the company of friends who smoke, encourages them to continue smoking. Because access to cigarettes is increased and cravings to smoke are sparked by watching other smokers. Across all groups, most participants’ peer groups consisted of a significant number of smokers. In every group, participants pointed to their friends who smoke as one reason why it is, or would be, difficult for them to stop smoking.

“For me, my roommate smokes a pack a day. So even if I wanted to quit, it’s constantly around you. Everywhere you turn you can smell it or you can see it.”
(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“Just about everyone I know smokes too. So it’s, like, if I’m sitting in a room with three or four other people smoking and I quit? What’s the difference? My mom is always smoking. My sister smokes. All of my friends smoke. All of my friends at work smoke. Everyone I know close to me smokes.”
(HBCU male smoker)

“Like college days, you’re surrounded by people your age and a lot of them are smoking. But once you get out in the real world, you won’t.”
(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“The people I know, like, who I hang around, most of them smoke.”
(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“Whenever you go into the house and you smell smoke, more than likely you are going to want one yourself.”
(HBCU male smoker)

“...peer pressure, because I tried not to do it. But if I’m around like a whole group of, like, my friends and they’re smoking, then automatically I’m gonna pick up a cigarette and start smoking too.”
(HBCU female smoker)

Addiction

Although addiction was mentioned in almost every group as a reason for continuing to smoke cigarettes, relatively few participants characterized themselves as addicted to cigarettes. The male and female non-HBCU groups discussed how a student may start as a social smoker when they enter college or become one soon after they enter college. Then, this social smoker quickly progresses to become a regular or addicted smoker—if he or she does not stop smoking within a certain time period. These students pointed to a combination of activities that contribute to this progression, such as (1) increased alcohol consumption, (2) stress, and (3) increased access.

“Start off smoking when you’re drinking, I guess, and then you kind of elevate until you’re addicted.”
(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“I think if you started when you were a freshman, you’re going to be smoking when you’re a senior. I mean a lot of people that started smoking when they were freshmen, like, 2 months into their freshman year, if they didn’t quit then, they kept smoking.”
(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I had my first cigarette in seventh grade at my best friend’s house and, like, we just, like, I’d spend the night and like midnight we’d sneak out and have cigarettes. It was just, like, something to do. And like I kind of smoked on and off

in high school, like, on weekends. Maybe two cigarettes on the weekend and then I guess end of freshman year, sophomore year, I started buying my own cigarettes.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“I think I probably tried my first cigarette when I was in, like, ninth grade. I started going out with my friends and at first, like, I really didn’t know how to smoke a cigarette. Like, I didn’t understand the concept of inhaling. And then, finally, like, my friends taught me and especially, like, where I live in New York City, so many people smoke. Kids start smoking when they’re in sixth grade. So after I tried my first one, I was just, like, a social smoker. I’d never buy a pack or anything and then senior year everyone started getting cars, so during school we would drive around and have a cigarette. My three best friends are smokers and I just started smoking a lot more and buying packs of cigarettes and then when I came to college, you know what we were talking about, how you’re totally free, and you don’t need to worry about parents, so now I’m, like, I buy a pack, like, I have cartons and stuff.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Although almost every group had at least one participant who identified himself or herself as addicted, both the male HBCU and non-HBCU participants were more like to say that they were addicted than the female HBCU and non-HBCU participants. The men were also less optimistic about their ability to quit.

“I’m totally addicted and have been for years. I smoke right about a pack, a little over a pack a day. So it’s, you know, one right when you get up, one right before you go to sleep, and then, like, you know. It’s not fun any more for me.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“It’s, like, each time you try to quit and you can’t, it’s such a blow to your self-esteem, you know, it just makes you feel terrible. It just makes you, like, not want to try to quit again because it seems like such an easy thing to do, but it’s not.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“...once you’re really addicted, there is withdrawal...it really does make you ill to stop smoking. I mean you’ll shake and you’ll get cold sweats and headaches and just want to sleep and not feel like doing anything and it just throws off your entire equilibrium.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“After a period of time, I’ll only think about cigarettes. Sometimes, I’ll be in class. I’ll wish the teacher would hurry up with what she’s going to say so I can go outside and smoke. Sometimes I start shaking if I don’t have one. If it’s been a long time. it’s awful....”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I’ve tried to quit many times. It just doesn’t happen. Because you get caught up doing it. If you think like smokers, you’re going to eat and go outside and have a cigarette. You got a quarter in your pocket, they got singe [cigarettes]. I’m not

going to buy a pack. I'm just going to smoke this one cigarette. And that's it. You're right back on the horse again."

(HBCU male smoker)

A perception of cigarette addiction is more of a mental than a physical phenomenon played a large role in many participants' beliefs that they were not addicted to cigarettes, despite their extensive discussion of how cigarettes had become a habit or part of their daily routine. Especially among females of both HBCU and non-HBCU groups, the idea of smoking cigarettes as an expression of personal choice and autonomy supported their belief that they could stop whenever they wanted. Since they choose to smoke cigarettes, they could choose to not smoke cigarettes. This sentiment is expressed in the following quote:

"Like me, I'm going to say I'm not addicted to it. I'm not in denial and I don't care what nobody else say. I'm not addicted to cigarettes because if I don't want to smoke, I don't have to smoke. I smoke because I want to smoke. I don't need to smoke, so I do it because I want to do it. I smoke!"

(HBCU female smoker)

Smoking Cessation Attempts

Female HBCU and non-HBCU participants were less likely to state that they had tried to quit smoking than their male counterparts. Their most common explanations for not attempting to quit were that (1) they enjoyed the act of smoking; (2) their current behavior was limited to their college years, so they would quit upon graduation, marriage, or motherhood; and (3) that they did not smoke enough to concern themselves with quitting at this point in their lives. Furthermore, across all groups, many participants stated that they had stopped smoking during sports seasons or when they went home for vacation out of respect for, or fear of, their parents; therefore, they were confident that they could quit when they decided to.

"I was just going to say that, like, I don't have a problem quitting smoking when I go home, like, 2 to 3 months at a time. But when I'm here, like, in college and stressed and I see every single person I know is smoking all the time, I just want it and I don't want to quit."

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Another reason some participants, across all groups, offered for not attempting to quit smoking was their personal knowledge of smokers who had lived a long time and never had a smoking-related illness. These smokers were pointed to as examples of the medical establishment's inability to accurately predict the long-term consequences of cigarette smoking. One group also discussed the lungs' ability to repair damage caused by smoking if one stops smoking within a specified timeframe. Participants in this group believed that as long as they did not exceed that timeframe they would be "safe" from the risk of lung cancer.

In one female HBCU group, several participants who reported that they had tried to quit, or were currently in the process of quitting, cited health concerns as their motivation. These participants were either experiencing negative health consequences as a result of their cigarette smoking or perceived themselves or a family member to be at increased risk for negative health consequences associated with cigarette smoke.

“Um, my heart doesn’t beat right after I smoke a lot. It skips a beat. Um, also, I have a fibroid tumor and I know smoking is a carcinogen and can cause and contribute to the growth of tumors. That’s why I tried to quit.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“Um, I quit because, seriously, I was watching ‘Oprah’ a couple of weeks ago and she was talking about osteoporosis. And that kind of scared me because I know I’m a high risk for that anyways and cigarettes kind of help that...”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I’ve quit numerous times, for numerous reasons. And I’ve stopped for, like, months every time. Um, there’s like when I go home, I might switch brands, I might just stop, because I was home and you know, I can’t smoke in my mother’s house, two of my little brothers have asthma. Um, once I quit because, I decided I was going back into aerobics and working out and that was just screwing up my breathing...”

(HBCU female smoker)

Male non-HBCU participants were more likely than other participants to state that they had “quit” for a limited period of time to test whether or not they were addicted. They interpreted their “success” as proof of their willpower and determination, and they were confident that they could repeat this success in the long term. However, HBCU males were more likely to characterize their attempts to quit as failures, and were less confident about their ability to stop, and were more willing to identify themselves as addicted.

Segment	Most Common Reasons for Attempting to Quit Smoking Cigarettes
HBCU Females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal negative health consequences • Negative health consequences for family member • Reduced ability to exercise
HBCU Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced ability and/or stamina to play sports • Personal health concerns
Non-HBCU Females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prove that they are not addicted
Non-HBCU Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prove that they are not addicted • Reduced ability and/or stamina to play sports

For those who have attempted to quit, the most common reasons for starting to smoke again across all groups were being around other smokers, being in social situations where they were drinking or smoking marijuana, occurrence of a stressful event, inability to resist the craving, boredom and lack of desire not to smoke. The male and female HBCU groups were more likely to list stress and being around others who smoke as motivating factors, whereas the male and female non-HBCU were more likely to point to alcohol consumption and being around others who smoke.

Segment	Most Common Reasons for Starting to Smoke Again
HBCU Females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress • Others smoking • Cravings • Drinking
HBCU Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Others smoking (particularly in bars) • Stress • School • Easy access to cigarettes
Non-HBCU Females	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habit • Friends who smoke
Non-HBCU Males	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to abate withdrawal symptoms • Drinking • Stress

Boredom

Across groups, some participants indicated that they continue to smoke cigarettes because it gives them “something to do” when they are bored. It occupies their hands and makes them look and feel busy. This appearance is especially beneficial when they are waiting for someone.

“I’m not stressed. I’m not anything. I’m watching TV usually. You just feel like smoking.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“You’ve got time to kill. The first thing you think is I might as well go and smoke a cigarette.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Like if I’m bored, I’ll just get a cigarette and smoke.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“... if I’m waiting for something, like I’m waiting outside of a building to go to class or whatever, and I don’t want to just like sit there and watch people and be like, kind of like, ‘Hi. I’m waiting for someone.’ It makes me feel more at ease like I’m there with a purpose.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Oral Fixations

Across all groups, participants discussed smoking as providing satisfaction for their oral fixations as a reason why they continue to smoke cigarettes. Participants described a need to have something in their mouths, whether it be a cigarette, candy, or something else.

“Oral fixation. It gives you something to. I have to be doing something.”

(Non-HBCU Female Smoker)

“I guess for me, I know for me, I have a long distance boyfriend and when I’m not around him, I smoke a lot. When I’m with him, my mouth is occupied, kind of.”

Like, I really, like, I don't know why [but] when I'm in a bar instead of smoking a cigarette, I just kiss him, like it's better, its more fun."

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

"Once you associate it with smoking, the whole action of it, you kind of get stuck on smoking. So that's why sometimes it doesn't even matter if it is actually cigarettes. Sometimes it can be a Black and Mild or something else...It's almost like an oral fixation. Sometimes you feel like you just have to have something to puff on."

(HBCU Male Smoker)

Cheaper and Easier in Georgia

In two of the groups, participants stated that Georgia's cheaper cigarette prices combined with fewer restrictions on public smoking—such as in restaurants or nightclubs—make it easier and more socially acceptable to smoke while attending college in Georgia. More than one non-HBCU student complained about how restrictive smoking is in their home states compared to Georgia. As a result, students inclined to smoke found it easier in Georgia's colleges.

"I don't smoke nearly as much at home as I do here because it's \$5.00 a pack in the Northeast."

(Non-HBCU male)

Curb Hunger or Stimulate Weight Loss

Another reason mentioned for continuing to smoke cigarettes was appetite control. This was mentioned in three groups, however reasons for controlling appetite varied among groups. In one male and one female HBCU group, smoking a cigarette was discussed as a way to ease hunger when they did not have time or were unable to eat. In contrast, in one female non-HBCU group, smoking cigarettes to curb one's appetite was viewed as a way to stimulate weight loss. The female non-HBCU group discussed how cigarettes *"kill taste buds, produce stomach acid, and increase metabolism."*

How Socially Acceptable Is it to Smoke Cigarettes?

Participants were asked to discuss the prevalence and visibility of smoking on their campuses as well as how the acceptability of cigarette smoking in their school and among their friends and family. Participants were also asked to describe what restrictions, if any, their school placed on smoking and how they felt about these. These questions were designed to gain better insight into how family, peers, and environment influence college students' decisions regarding smoking.

Prevalence and Visibility

As an indicator of the social acceptability of smoking on campus, participants were asked how common smoking is among students at their respective schools. The non-HBCU male and female participants attended the same school and had similar perceptions of the prevalence and visibility of smoking. Both the male and female non-HBCU students estimated that between 70% and 80% of the students on their campus are social smokers and about 25–30% are regular smokers. The classification of social and regular smokers emerged spontaneously from the groups. They also

stated that smoking on campus is common among both males and females; however, females are more likely to smoke and be social smokers.

Although participants were not asked about smoking on other campuses, participants in the male and female non-HBCU groups mentioned the high prevalence and visibility of smoking on a small satellite campus affiliated with the non-HBCU. According to these participants, more than 90% of students attending the satellite campus smoke cigarettes and being a non-smoker on that campus is very difficult.

“...[a]nd then when I went to college, I went to [satellite campus] first, which is little [non-HBCU] I guess. And if you don’t come in there smoking cigarettes, you come out of there. I don’t know anybody who goes to [satellite campus], maybe 10 I know that don’t smoke out of, like, 600. I mean seriously. It’s like we have this place called the ashtray where everybody goes to smoke. And so I had my first cigarette at [satellite campus].”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Female HBCU students were more likely to report that smoking on campus is uncommon among women at their schools; however, they believed that many female HBCU students are more likely to smoke in private or when they are out at clubs or parties. At one HBCU institution, participants thought that only 3–10 women, at most, openly smoke in the entire college. For the other HBCU institutions, participants estimated smoking as ranging from 40% to 60%; however, most of these smokers were considered occasional or social smokers.

The female HBCU students also stated that a large percentage of HBCU men who smoke, usually smoke other tobacco products in addition to or in place of cigarettes, such as Black and Mild cigars, bidis and clove cigarettes. This was affirmed by the men themselves. The male HBCU students estimated that 25%–60% of the men on their campus smoke cigarettes, and the number would be higher if other tobacco products were added.

When asked if gender differences exist in terms of the prevalence of smoking, both male and female HBCU students agreed that men were more likely to smoke, and to smoke openly than women. In contrast, they agreed that women were less likely to smoke, and if they did, they were usually “closet” or social smokers.

“Well, since she said that, I realize that, like, if you go outside of school, especially parties and clubs and stuff like that it is, I guess, like, that environment just kind of enhances the need for it, or people just want to be seen smoking. I don’t know what it is, but, yeah, like outside of school, like people that you never see smoking on campus are, you know, usually out, like smoking at a party.”

(HBCU female smoker)

Social Acceptability

Not surprisingly, perceptions of less visibility were correlated with increased perceptions of stigma toward cigarette smokers. Male and female HBCU participants reported that students were reluctant to smoke on campus because they would be perceived negatively by their peers and professors. At one institution, HBCU female participants stated that a person who openly smoked on campus would not be able to assume a leadership position at that school. The male

HBCU students stated that students on their campus thought that professors would not write a recommendation for a student they saw smoking. Similarly, the male HBCU students said that athletes who smoke are afraid to smoke on campus out of fear that their coach might see them.

“In a social environment, but, like, on campus a lot of people are worried about what other people are thinking, so they don’t. You know.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“Because it is all about politics, it’s all about presenting yourself as a certain type of person.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I know people who just won’t take the pack out of their car. They just go to their car and smoke.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Acceptance of Women Who Smoke

The female HBCU students faced an additional layer of stigma, since many of their male and female peers considered smoking to be “unladylike” behavior. Interestingly, in male HBCU and non-HBCU groups, participants expressed displeasure about dating women who smoke. The most common reasons cited were dislike of the smell in a woman’s hair or clothing, the bad taste when they kiss, and the possibility that they would smoke more with her. Although some of these male participants thought that their feelings could be considered hypercritical, they remained steadfast in their preference to date women who do not smoke.

“I don’t know, I guess it’s some type of thing I got in my mind, but it’s like, even though I smoke, in the back of my mind, I don’t want a girl who smokes, but when I get logical with it, I prefer she smokes”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I guess, like, the whole mother nurturing, I guess, in a lot of ways if a guy does something that’s bad for his health and that kind of stuff. You don’t, I don’t think about it as much, but for women, when they smoke, you’re thinking long-term, well, she has to have the kids, that means she has to stop smoking, and how hard is that gonna be for her to stop smoking while she’s pregnant and anything like that, you know.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I don’t know, first of all, she smokes, I’m gonna be smoking and second of all second of all, it’s just, I’d rather have a girl, where, you know what I’m saying . . . nice skin, pink lips, instead of brown lips, you know what I mean, just simple things like that, smelling like a lady, or smelling good at least and like that.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Acceptance by Non-smokers

Despite the seemingly greater acceptability of smoking on the non-HBCU campus, participants’ responses did not demonstrate a difference between institutions in how smokers are treated by non-smokers. While some non-smokers do not seem to care, others reportedly make remarks

about how bad smoking is and look down upon smokers. Many participants commented that the negative judgment and other people's assumptions that they are ignorant of the effects of smoking angers them because they are fully aware of the harmful effects of cigarette smoking.

"I'm really tired of people telling me not to smoke. Like the other day, I'm down at Five Points and I had ordered something from McDonalds, so I'm standing out there and I'm having a cigarette. And it started to rain, so I'm on the corner and this guy comes over and says, 'You know, smoking is bad for your health. 'And I was like, 'Yeah, I know. I'm gonna try to die a lot sooner than most people.' And he said, 'Well, yeah, that will do it. And I said, 'Thanks for your input.' But I really didn't want to hear it. I mean, I'm just trying to have a cigarette, get my ride, and go home. I mean, you're just not in the mood to hear it. You know smoking is bad for you. You know that it does cause lung cancer and throat cancer and gives you bad breath if you don't chew gum, you need to wash your hands, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I have the facts, I know. It's not like I don't know what I'm doing. I just don't constantly need someone telling me what to do. I can make my own decisions."

(HBCU female smoker)

Across all groups, most respondents said that they understand and respect a non-smoker's being offended by the smell of cigarettes because, even though they smoke, participants themselves do not like the smell of lingering cigarette smoke. These participants discussed restrictions they place on their own and friends' smoking behavior, such as not allowing smoking in their rooms, or houses, in the car. Many of the women in the non-HBCU groups also talked about brushing their teeth, spraying themselves with perfume, washing and putting lotion on their hands, and chewing gum to mask the smell of cigarette smoke.

Acceptance by parents, friends and significant others

Many participants in each group stated that their parents either did not know or were in denial about their smoking behavior. Many of the participants consciously hid their smoking behavior from their parents. The most common reason respondents gave for avoiding frank conversations with their parents about their cigarette smoking was fear of disappointing them. Participants were much more open about their smoking behavior with their friends and, to a lesser extent, significant others, who were usually smokers themselves. Their candidness with significant others about their smoking behavior increased with the seriousness of the relationship. Although a few were bothered by their parents' discontent with their smoking, participants' current smoking behavior was generally unaffected by parents' opinions. However, participants who stated that they were in a serious relationship with someone who either did not smoke or disliked the participant's smoking were more likely to state they would not be smoking in 5 years.

School Restrictions

Based on participants' responses, it appears that the HBCU campuses appear to be more restrictive than non-HBCU campuses about where or when students can smoke. Participants from the non-HBCU were more apt to say that smoking was allowed in certain dormitories and in certain buildings, whereas participants from HBCUs reported that dormitories and buildings were smoke free.

While participants across all groups recognized the convenience of being able to smoke in their rooms, many stated that they liked the idea of smoke-free dormitories. Forbidding smoking in rooms was seen as safer, more considerate of others, and would help keep their belongings from smelling like smoke. Similarly, many participants with their own apartments also opted to keep their homes smoke free. In addition, some participants stated that they were glad that they could not smoke in their rooms because it helped them to limit the amount of cigarettes they smoked. Only a few expressed discontent with having to go outside to smoke, particularly when it is cold or when they think of the money they have spent to live in their room.

How Influential Are Tobacco Advertisements?

Print Advertisements

Participants were asked to recall and describe common images in tobacco advertisements and discuss their possible influence on adolescents' decisions to smoke cigarettes. Participants across all groups reported seeing advertisements for cigarettes in magazines, on television, or on billboards. In all the male groups, participants recalled seeing Joe Camel[®] advertisements, and in almost all of the groups, participants recalled Virginia Slims[®] advertisements.

Participants in the HBCU groups primarily recalled advertisements for Newport[®] cigarettes in magazines targeted to African Americans, such as *Jet!*, and in billboards and small corner stores in their neighborhoods.

The male and female non-HBCU students described the Marlboro[®] man as “cool,” “tough” and “independent,” whereas the Virginia Slim advertisements depicted women as “sexy” and “glamorous.” The HBCU students described the Newport[®] advertisements as “people having a good time” and the man always “getting the girl.” Despite these positive images, across all groups, participants did not think that these images or the advertisements themselves had an impact on most teenagers' decisions to start or continue smoking. Participants described those who decide to smoke cigarettes because of advertisements as “weak” and “impressionable” adolescents who are not secure. Several participants believed that advertisements are more likely to influence or reinforce brand choice and recognition than encourage smoking initiation.

In one HBCU female group, participants believed that most African American adolescents are less likely to be influenced by most cigarette advertisements since they tend not to feature African American people.

Movies and TV

Unexpectedly, movies and television programs were mentioned in almost every group as a source of “advertisement.” These images were much more salient for participants than print or billboard advertisements. Participants also thought that these images had a stronger influence on their personal smoking behaviors than images in print media and that they had an influence on adolescents' decisions to smoke. One participant in one female HBCU group stated that the lead character in the popular HBO original series “Sex in the City” was “always smoking” and every time she watched that show, she wanted a cigarette. Several other participants agreed with her. Similarly, participants who watched movies in which the lead character smoked usually felt a desire to smoke once the movie was over.

Across all groups, but particularly in the non-HBCU groups, participants thought that movie stars who smoke project “cool” and “glamorous” images and were able to name quite a few who smoke cigarettes both on and off screen, such as Gwyneth Paltrow, Brad Pitt, Johnny Depp, Val Kilmer, and Robert DeNiro. Many also described a passion for old movies and classic stars who smoked in ways that were memorable.

“[U]sually it is almost art to smoke a cigarette in a movie.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Famous movie stars, the beautiful young people, you always see them smoking.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“Whenever you see Johnny Depp, he’s always smoking.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“I mean the cool images that you’re going to see are in, like, movies and stuff like that.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I felt like James Dean. I used to watch James Dean movies when I was a kid. He’d sit there with the leather jacket smoking a cigarette and he’d be inhaling and doing this with his hand. I just thought he was cool. I wanted to be like him.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I was going to say, along with movies, that also happens in ‘Tombstone’ with Val Kilmer’s character but he’s still a badass, even at the end. Like he’s coughing throughout the whole movie, he’s dying throughout the whole movie, but he’s still smoking. At the end, though, he’s still pretty heroic.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I mean I really like Howard Hawks’ movies and Humphrey Bogart and Humphrey Bogart’s sitting there with a cigarette, smokes it, he’s a private detective, it’s really cool. I mean he’d be cool anyway even if he didn’t smoke, he just happens to smoke because he’s a hard-boiled detective. And those are the images that are cool, a lot of, like, smoking Camels with women or something like that.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“...I mean TV and movies, that sort of stuff definitely have more impact on me than to begin than what advertising I saw.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I think the only thing that would influence someone to smoke is seeing it in the sitcoms, seeing your favorite star smoking or seeing yourself on TV in a situation. And the person is smoking. And you’re, like okay, well.”

(HBCU female smoker)

According to these groups, seeing others smoke, whether it be in the movies, walking down the street, or in one’s family, is the best advertisement for cigarettes.

“The ads never got me. The first thing I started smoking was a Black and Mild. And you never see ads for Black and Milds.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Every person who smokes is a walking advertisement. So you don’t really need the other stuff. That’s just very secondary. You’re just watching everyone else smoke. They look like they are enjoying it. You see someone really mad and they storm out of class and then they sit down and smoke a cigarette...and they just look like the world just calmed down.”

(HBCU male smoker)

In one female non-HBCU group, the discussion of images of smokers in movies led the participants to talk about how a cigarette “completes their look.” As these participants described the primary images they saw of smokers in the movies, the “glamorous” woman and the “tough punk,” they began to relate those images to themselves and their own cigarette smoking behavior.

“The two polar opposites of like the extra feminine and the extra masculine. And, like, if I dress really nicely and have my cigarette and look really sophisticated, I feel ultra feminine in some way.”

“Yeah, like, you’ve completed your look.”

“Like sitting at the bar in my dress with my fancy drink and my cigarette.”

“It goes even better with a glass of wine or martini than it does with a glass of beer.”

“If you have a beer and you’re in your jeans and you’re in your sweatshirt and you’re at a park bench, then it’s entirely different.”

(Non-HBCU female smokers)

Anti-Tobacco Advertisements

Another unexpected finding was that in every group participants mentioned anti-smoking campaigns, such as the American Legacy Foundation’s “Truth” campaigns. Participants’ reactions to this campaign were mixed. The discussion of the commercials usually produced a great deal of lively conversation and some derisive laughter among the groups. However, one of the effective campaigns that they mentioned, particularly in the non-HBCU groups, was the April Fool’s ad from Legacy which had been aired a few weeks prior to the focus groups. In almost every group, participants stated that the campaign ads, in general, made them think about the negative effects of smoking and the benefits of quitting, but the thoughts were usually only for a short time.

Some participants believed that the anti-smoking advertisements influenced smoking maintenance because seeing smokers, regardless of the circumstances, makes smokers want to smoke. Others argued that the campaign was not effective because of its use of overly dramatic scare tactics and the presumption that most smokers do not know or understand the risks of

smoking and are therefore making an uninformed choice. They thought that the campaign would probably be more effective in preventing young people from smoking initially than in convincing current smokers to stop. However, the respondents believed that the negative emphasis of the ads might run the risk of appealing to some young adolescents who are looking for ways to rebel.

“Like those body bag commercials, I would never, just because I see that think, ‘Oh God, I better stop smoking.’ That’s, like, more, you put it in my face more. It does the opposite, more likely. It depends. Like, I’m not gonna stop smoking just because you gave me a message like you just posted it, ‘You smoke because you’re an outsider.’ You know. I mean back home, we have these little poster boards back home that say, like, ‘If you’re a kid and you’re smoking, you’re in no where’sville.’ To me those be like, I don’t care. Like now, I don’t care what most people think about me. I do it because I feel like it. I mean, I don’t do it around you, but when you’re not there, I’ll do what I want.”

(HBCU female smoker)

Participants, regardless of gender or institutional affiliation, were also skeptical about the effectiveness of anti-tobacco advertisements supported by tobacco companies. Many of them described the ads as covert advertisements for tobacco companies who face legal restrictions on other forms of advertisement.

“I don’t think the situation with cigarettes is going to change. With these new commercials, they found a loophole.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“If you’re running a business, are you going to advertise to people to stop going to your business? Like McDonald’s saying, ‘Don’t eat McDonald’s burgers anymore. They’re not real meat. Don’t come to McDonald’s.’ Unless you lose a lawsuit and someone says now run some ads to get people to stop using your product.”

(HBCU Male Smoker)

How Have Tobacco Companies Advertised in the Places Where College Students Socialize?

Participants were asked about the presence of tobacco advertising on campus and in the places they frequent. To assess how their experiences compared to those described in anecdotal accounts of campus and off-campus student activities. College students in these groups were not aware of overt marketing or advertising efforts by tobacco companies on their campuses. However, participants in the male HBCU groups raised the possibility that tobacco companies might be advertising in a more covert manner by donating money to their schools.

“The real money is putting money into the schools so that they can allow more black males to come here, which is like one of the highest percentages of people who smoke cigarettes. That’s where the real money is. It’s going to cultivate more people who smoke. That’s where the real money is. Not having a picnic and putting your name all over it. It’s bringing more smokers to the other smokers. People that don’t smoke will be around the people that do.”

(HBCU male smoker)

With the exception of a few participants in the male HBCU groups, only non-HBCU groups reported seeing tobacco company representatives giving out free cigarettes and other items at the local clubs or bars they frequent. In the non-HBCU groups, many participants spoke freely and knowledgeably about merchant-related activities that feature tobacco products as an integral part of their favorite social activities. They noted that many local clubs and bars advertise in the local free newspaper to let young people know when and where tobacco product giveaways will occur. Also, during their spring breaks, tobacco representatives give out free items at popular beaches, participants said. Participants in the male non-HBCU groups mentioned seeing tobacco representatives at NASCAR races as well. Students suggested that the primary impact of this marketing technique—going where students socialize—might be to encourage brand switching rather than smoking initiation. But none of them reported switching their brands based on a free give-away.

“Sometimes, when you are in bars and they ask you some questions, and they give you free cigarettes.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“You can go and get free packs of cigarettes at [a local club]. It’s advertised in the [a local free newspaper]. It will be a Camel[®] page. If you go to a certain club, I believe they’ll give you a free pack of cigarettes.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“The Camel[®] man, they are everywhere, it’s amazing. They come to you and they ask you some questions and they give you a bag of Camels[®]. They just give it to you.”

(Non-HBCU Female Smoker)

“And there’s a Marlboro[®] man too.”

(Non-HBCU Female Smoker)

One participant who worked in a local bar described how the free giveaways occur at his place of employment.

“I work at a bar and they are always there. It’s awesome. You sign up and get tons of free cigarettes. You just sign your own name and give them your information and either they will send you something like NASCAR race tickets and then they will give you something like tons of packs of cigarettes, so you will have a supply for the week. It’s awesome.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Non-HBCU participants also described free cigarette giveaways during Spring Break.

“[During spring break], we went to the grill and there were men with huge bags just giving away cigarettes. Cigarettes ... cigarettes. It was like a joke, everyone knew the cigarette man. You didn’t have to go anywhere, they came to you. They were like, ‘Do you want some cigarettes?’”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“During Spring break, everywhere you went, they were passing out free cigarettes.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Several participants described the free giveaways as a strategy employed by tobacco companies to advertise their products, particularly to non-smokers and individuals who consider themselves social smokers.

“The government has pretty much handcuffed them in the advertisement department, so they have to give them away. I mean they flood it with cigarettes so you smoke their cigarettes for a while. It’s just a business decision.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I think they do it because if you don’t smoke, you won’t have to buy a pack of cigarettes. If you’ve got free cigarettes there, it’s like well let me try one. You try one and you get drunk and you try two or three and the next day you wake up, you may have a craving for it. Maybe still a week later and you don’t know why. And it all started from free cigarettes.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Why Do People Prefer Menthol or Non-menthol Cigarettes?

Approximately three of every four African American smokers prefer menthol cigarettes, compared to one in four Caucasians, according to the 1998 U.S. Surgeon General Report, “Tobacco Use Among U.S. Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups.” As part of a preliminary exploration of the reasons for this striking difference, participants were asked if differences exist between menthol and non-menthol smokers, what type of cigarette they first smoked and why; and what they thought were the reasons for the racial differences in preference.⁹

The background information sheet revealed the anticipated difference in cigarette type preference between students who attend an HBCU and those who attend a non-HBCU. The overwhelming majority of HBCU students preferred menthol cigarettes, while non-HBCU students preferred non-menthol cigarettes. Although five male HBCU students stated that they had no preference, three of them smoked menthol cigarettes. HBCU students appeared to be unsure of the difference between menthol and non-menthol cigarettes and were more familiar with brand names such as Newport[®] and Kools[®].

⁹ A more in-depth study of the racial and ethnic differences in menthol preference among African Americans and Caucasians is planned for a later date.

Table 3.
Cigarette Type Preferences among College Focus Group Participants

Menthol/ Non-Menthol Preference	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Menthol	9	10	2	0	21
Non-menthol	2	1	10	15	28
No preference	5	2	2	1	10
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

Across the groups, participants who identified themselves as “social smokers” and rarely bought packs of cigarettes themselves, were more likely to state that they had no preference.

“Well, now that I’m trying to cut back or stop, I don’t buy any more cigarettes. So whoever has some, I take it. Whatever, it doesn’t matter. But most of my friends smoke menthol.”

(HBCU female smoker)

When participants were asked if they thought there were any differences between menthol and non-menthol smokers, across all groups, but particularly in the non-HBCU groups, the immediate response was no. As one HBCU female smoker stated, “[n]o, I mean, smokers are smokers. You don’t separate.” However, when the moderator probed by rephrasing the question as, “Do you think certain types of people are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes, for instance, by race, gender or socioeconomic status?” all the groups stated that African Americans tend to smoke menthol and Caucasians tend to smoke non-menthol cigarettes. In several groups, participants stated that poor people were also more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes. The non-HBCU groups were more hesitant to make these attributions and they expressed concern about unfairly stereotyping people.

“I know people who are affluent blacks. I know a family in Denver, and the two children smoke Camels.® I kind of figure it’s more of a lower class thing because white people smoke Newports® who are poor. It’s a color line. But it is also a class issue.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“Another difference I’ve noticed between menthol and non-menthol smokers is socioeconomic status. I’m not like saying one thing or the other, but most of the people I worked with that were, like, lower to middle class smoked menthols, always smoked menthols. Smoked Newports.® They’re usually cheaper and I’ve noticed like people I meet, or like people that I see, typically, like, more like middle to upper class women smoke light cigarettes, Marlboro® Lights,

Parliament[®] Lights, or Camel[®] Lights. Guys smoke mediums or reds and people of lower socioeconomic status typically smoke menthols. It's true of all of them, but it's what I've noticed."

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

Non-HBCU groups also associated menthol cigarettes with drug use, particularly the designer drug, Ecstasy.

"I've been to, like, a rave before and I associate menthols with people doing drugs. Everybody at a rave will have a pack of menthols."

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

In the HBCU groups, the preference for a type of cigarette was also expressed as a preference for certain brand of cigarettes, such as, Newport.[®] Whether participants thought that the brand was a more important determinant of preference than type is not clear.

"There are, like, certain brands that, like, black people smoke and certain ones white people smoke."

(HBCU female smoker)

"Because, I mean, I think brand names also. Because, I mean, very rarely will you see a black person smoke like a Marlboro[®] cigarette or a white person smoke Newport.[®]"

(HBCU female smoker)

One female non-HBCU group had an inBdepth discussion of how the brand a person, particularly a woman, smokes is an indicator of personality as well as social background. Participants in this group stated that certain brands and types of cigarettes are acceptable among their peer group. These were Camel,[®] Marlboro,[®] and Parliament[®] Light or Ultra Light. These cigarettes were perceived as between "feminine" and "masculine" cigarettes. If a woman in their peer group was seen smoking a Marlboro Red,[®] for instance, she would stand out in a negative way because Reds are perceived as too harsh and masculine. One female non-HBCU student stated that she switched from Marlboro Reds[®] to Marlboro Lights[®] to avoid such negative perceptions. Virginia Slims[®] and Capri[®] cigarettes, according to participants, are associated with older women and "trailer trash."

"I think with our group, I don't know if it has something to do with marketing or, how, typically I think most of us are trying to break away from that feminine personality, and, like, stereotype and smoking, like a Camel[®] Light or a Camel[®] or something like that is, brings us more towards the middle and masculine extreme typically, like [being] masculine and sitting there and smoking feminine cigarettes."

Participants also indicated that racial and economic differences alone may not fully explain preferences for menthol cigarettes. Rather, social influences, such as one's peer group, may play a more powerful role in determining preference. As one HBCU female smoker stated, "...I know a lot of white people that hang out with black people who smoke Newport[®] or Kools[®]...They won't touch a Marlboro.[®]" In one HBCU group, a white student had smoked non-menthol

before attending the HBCU; however, within a few weeks of his arrival at the HBCU, he switched to menthol cigarettes because they were the most available cigarettes. He stated that he now prefers menthol cigarettes.

Interestingly, the racial difference in preference was explained similarly by all groups. The four most common reasons mentioned by participants were:

- Availability
- Familiarity
- Taste and strength
- Perception of health effects

Availability and Familiarity

Most participants stated that for their first cigarette, they smoked whatever cigarette was available to them. Either they found it or it was what their peer group or family member smoked. Likewise, most participants continued smoking whatever type of cigarette they first smoked, particularly if people in their peer group smoked that type of cigarette. For non-HBCU participants, non-menthol cigarettes were the most common first cigarette and the most common type of cigarette smoked in their peer group. HBCU participants stated the same was true of menthol cigarettes. Menthol is what they first smoked, it is the type of cigarette most likely to be sold and advertised in predominantly black communities, and it is what their peers, and often, family members, smoke. In this way, availability and familiarity are closely linked.

“Yeah, I think it’s environment and who you are around, kind of. Because both of my parents smoke Newports,[®] so it was sort of, okay, that’s what’s available. So that’s what I smoked too. You might try other things, but if you really don’t like it, you just go back to what you’re comfortable with.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“That’s what they advertise in the black community.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“...black people out there, they smoke menthol cigarettes and white people smoke non-menthol cigarettes. So it depends where you grew up at, what type of neighborhood you’re in.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I smoke Newport[®] because I’m, like, from the streets and that’s what all my boys smoke.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“If you grew up in the ‘hood, like 99% of the time you are going to smoke Newports’s[®]. If you grew up around white people, probably there’s going to be a better chance you smoke non-menthol.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Taste and Strength

Participants in the HBCU groups consistently stated that they prefer the “minty” taste of menthol cigarettes and the cool sensation they feel when they inhale. They also stated that menthol cigarettes are stronger than non-menthols, so they can smoke less to obtain the same effect.

“You don’t need as much of a menthol as you do a non-menthol to get the same effect.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“I know one thing, you smoke menthol, you can’t smoke too many of them, ‘cause you’ll get, like, a hangover.”

(HBCU male smoker)

Non-HBCU participants shared very different opinions about the taste of menthol cigarettes. They described menthol cigarettes as harsh and did not like the “weird minty taste.”

“It’s that weird minty, tingles your lungs and I don’t like it. It’s not good at all.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I mean I can smoke [menthols] if I don’t have any other cigarettes, but I don’t like them. It’s like smoking and eating a cough drop at the same time.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

“I don’t know, people that smoke menthols, that’s all they smoke. They won’t smoke anything else. If you’re out of menthols, they’ll go insane. They need menthols.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Perceived Health Effects

Although, participants from HBCU and non-HBCUs both expressed the belief that menthol cigarettes have more harmful health effects than non-menthol cigarettes, this was cited as a reason not to smoke menthol much more frequently in the non-HBCU groups. Participants, particularly in the non-HBCU groups, described instances when they or others have coughed up blood while smoking menthol cigarettes. They also stated that this effect may be due to added fiberglass in menthol cigarettes. When probed about why they thought African Americans preferred menthol cigarettes, non-HBCU participants attributed the preference to personal taste and greater brand loyalty among African Americans.

“Those are the worst kind to smoke, supposedly Newports,[®] because they have fiberglass.”

(HBCU female smoker)

“They’ve got fiberglass and they make your lungs bleed.”

(Non-HBCU female smoker)

“There’s something about menthol. I’ve tried. I broke it down. I started on Newports,[®] Newport Lights,[®] went to Marlboro Milds,[®] and went to some light menthol. There’s something about menthol that, like, produces an allergic reaction in my body. Every day, I cough up something. I used to wake up every day at a certain hour, like seven o’clock in the morning, hacking my brains out...and then I just stopped smoking menthol cigarettes.”

(HBCU male smoker)

“I used to hear stories about them just coughing blood one day in class. They had to leave and stuff. And I just never smoked them. Actually, I smoked one once and like, I just remember thinking it was nasty and just like, you said, that weird tingle.”

(Non-HBCU male smoker)

Some non-menthol smokers said that they will switch to menthol cigarettes when they are sick because menthol cigarettes have a cooling effect on their throats. Most of these participants also described themselves as addicted to cigarettes, indicating that refraining from smoking is not an option for them.

V. HBCU Female Non-Smoker Focus Groups

Methodology

Because of the difficulty of recruiting female smokers from the HBCUs, two additional focus groups were conducted, with HBCU female non-smokers. To learn more about the reasons for the apparent low rate of cigarette smoking among women who attend the HBCUs in this study. For the purposes of this study, a “non-smoker” was defined as an individual who reports that she does not smoke cigarettes, has not smoked a cigarette in the past 6 months, and states she has no intention of smoking a cigarette in the next 6 months. HBCU female students who have previously smoked cigarettes, either occasionally or regularly, but decided not to continue, were eligible to participate, as were students who had never smoked a cigarette.¹⁰

For these groups, several additional research questions were added to the focus group discussion guide and some questions about specific behaviors were omitted. These research questions were aimed at understanding why HBCU female students choose *not* to smoke and how they develop and use their refusal skills. Based on the findings from the college smokers groups, we also asked HBCU female non-smokers about their perceptions of the relationships between cigarette smoking and alcohol, other tobacco products, and cigarette smoking and marijuana, if these subjects did not spontaneously arise during the discussion. The additional research questions are:

- A. What are the factors that influence HBCU female non-smokers’ decision not to smoke?
- How do social norms about smoking affect female non-smoker’ decision not to initiate and to discontinue smoking?

¹⁰The definition of “non-smoker” was intended to be inclusive while ensuring participants were actual non-smokers rather than individuals who may smoke cigarettes occasionally or in social settings, but do not consider themselves smokers.

- What role do peers play in influencing or supporting decisions not to smoke?
 - What role do families play in decisions not to smoke?
 - What role does the environment (e.g., college campus, social setting, living situation) play in a student’s decision not to smoke?
- B. How do HBCU female non-smokers develop refusal skills and employ them in different situations?
- C. What role does social stigma play in the apparent low incidence of cigarette smoking among HBCU female students?
- Are HBCU female students less likely to admit that they smoke cigarettes and more likely to be “closet” cigarette smokers than HBCU male students and non-HBCU male and female students?
- D. What is the relationship between cigarette smoking, marijuana, alcohol, and other tobacco products among students who attend HBCUs?

Based on these questions, a discussion guide was developed. The first two sections were designed to learn why HBCU female students choose not to smoke. The third section briefly explored perceptions of racial and ethnic similarities and differences in preference for menthol and non-menthol cigarettes. The last section addressed messages and strategies that might be effective in convincing college students to quit smoking.

Description of Participants

Seventeen female HBCU students participated in the two focus groups, only four of whom had ever tried a cigarette (even a puff), and each of these individuals did so before high school. The groups included no self-identified “regular” or “occasional” previous smokers. The average age of participants was 19 years. The average year in school was sophomore, and only one senior participated. All except two participants reported that almost none or none of their friends smoke cigarettes, however, 12 participants reported that at least one close family member smokes.

Summary of Major Findings

Who is a Typical Non-Smoker or Smoker?

As noted in the smoker groups, HBCU female non-smokers stated that non-smokers are not inherently different from smokers. With the exception of certain physical characteristics, a person can not always tell who is a smoker or a non-smoker by looking at them. The “tell-tale” physical characteristics were described as dark lips, stained teeth, frequent coughing or spitting and a lingering cigarette odor. As in the HBCU smoker groups, these physical signs were closely linked with whether or not a person also smoked marijuana or other tobacco products, such as Black and Milds.

Despite this consensus about the difficulty of identifying a non-smoker based on physical appearance, both groups stated that cigarette smokers tend to behave differently than non-

smokers. Participants reported that smokers are more “agitated” and “hyper” than non-smokers. Smokers were also described as being less stable and less in control of their behavior. According to participants, smokers “always want something” to help them cope with stress or other issues in their lives. One group also described smokers as being less-well kept and less physically attractive than non-smokers.

Participants did not believe that students with certain majors are more or less likely to smoke than others; however, most respondents believed that freshmen are more inclined to smoke for a variety of reasons including curiosity, the desire to impress their peers, and the desire to assert their independence from their parents.

How Did the First Cigarette Smoking Experience Occur?

Across both groups, very few participants had ever tried a cigarette. For those who had tried, either a family member or friend smoked and the respondents stated that they were curious and wanted “to see what it was like.” Respondents described strong negative physical reactions to cigarette smoking, including coughing and feelings of nausea. Unlike the participants in the smoker focus groups, HBCU female non-smokers stated that these negative physical reactions helped deter them from continuing to smoke cigarettes.

Most of the respondents who had never tried a cigarette stated that they “never had a desire” to smoke and did not feel unduly pressured by peers or anyone else to start smoking. If they were offered a cigarette when they were younger, they declined, and that would be the end of the conversation. Many respondents attributed their involvement in sports or other extracurricular activities and their knowledge of their future professional goals as the main reasons for their lack of past and current desire to smoke.

Why Do HBCU Female Non-Smokers Choose Not to Smoke?

Participants offered a variety of reasons for choosing not to smoke cigarettes. The most common reasons included:

- Negative health consequences, including lip, oral, and lung cancer, as well as shortness of breath.
- Personal knowledge of someone who was ill or died of a smoking-related illness
- Negative aesthetic effects, including bad breath, stained teeth, and the smell of cigarette smoke
- Family and moral values
- Financial cost
- Fear of addiction
- Negative physical appearance of cigarette smoking
- Future career goals

Cigarettes were often referred to as “cancer sticks,” and smoking as “slow suicide.” Several participants mentioned the negative side effects of additives, such as formaldehyde, as another deterrent to smoking cigarettes. Many participants vividly recalled viewing pictures of damaged

lungs and voice boxes while in elementary and high school. These images appear to have influenced and strengthened their perceptions of the negative health consequences of smoking. Participants exposure to family members who smoked also appears to have strengthened their resolve not to smoke cigarettes. Many participants mentioned at least one family member whom they characterized as having experienced severe health problems as a result of smoking cigarettes.

HBCU female non-smokers, in contrast to smokers in all of the other groups, tended to view smoking cigarettes as “wrong” or against their family or moral values. As one participant stated, “[My] parents taught [me] that my body was a temple” to be respected and smoking cigarettes would contradict her parents teachings. Even in families that included smokers, participants knew that their parents would be very unhappy and disappointed if they smoked. Neither of the groups expressed a desire to rebel against their family members’ wishes in this area.

Participants also believed strongly that smoking “is not cute,” and that it makes people, particularly African American men, disassociate themselves from women who smoke. Participants in both groups said that African American men do not like to see women smoking, and view it as a “turnoff.” Smoking cigarettes was also viewed by some participants as discordant with their future plans to become doctors or other kinds of professionals. Not only would it be “wrong” for them to smoke cigarettes and have a health-related career, but it would also be viewed as a sign of personal weakness.

Why Do College Students Like Themselves Start and Continue Smoking Cigarettes?

Across both groups, HBCU female non-smokers identified three primary reasons why they believe college students start and continue to smoke cigarettes: (1) stress, (2) rebellion, and (3) family and peer influences. Although the non-smokers did not think that smoking was an effective means to relieve stress, they did believe that smokers view it as such. A few respondents reported that they considered smoking themselves as a stress reliever, however, they were “strong” enough not to give into the temptation.

The non-smokers also stated that many college students, particularly freshmen, decide to smoke cigarettes because they are away from home, in college, and are “grown up” so they can do whatever they want. Participants characterized this as rebellion, whereas smokers, particularly non-HBCU smokers, were more likely to describe this behavior as the need to establish independence and autonomy from their families. Non-smokers also stated that smoking cigarettes is a social phenomenon and that if a person “hangs around” with smokers, they are inclined to smoke too. Smokers’ inability to resist this kind of peer influence or pressure was characterized as another sign of personal weakness by the HBCU female non-smokers.

In discussions of parental and other family influences, opinions varied about whether having close relatives who smoke cigarettes functions as a deterrent or facilitator. Some respondents stated that, if a parent or close family member smokes, a child may be more likely to smoke for a variety of reasons, including increased access, curiosity, perceived normalcy of the behavior and a desire to emulate their parents. Others argued that having a parent or close family member who smokes could cause a child to develop an aversion to smoking if the child dislikes the behavior. This finding is interesting in light of the fact that, according to the background information sheet, 12 of the 17 participants had at least one close family member who smokes cigarettes.

One group believed strongly that much of the influence on starting to smoke occurs before college, and, depending on many factors, including parental influence, peer pressure, and stress, a person may or may not choose to smoke in high school. The same group firmly believed that most people do not come to college and begin smoking simply because people around them are smoking. They suggested that a predisposition to smoke, caused by curiosity, exposure or personal insecurities takes hold before a person enters college. This point did not emerge from the second group of non-smokers.

How Socially Acceptable Is Cigarette Smoking?

Non-smokers' perceptions of cigarette smoking on their campuses were strikingly similar to those of the HBCU female smokers. Participants from the HBCU that admits only female students stated that less than 1% of their classmates smoke cigarettes. Non-smoker participants also reported that a stigma is associated with smoking cigarettes on this HBCU campus. Smokers were described as outcasts and antithetical to the school's image of a successful, professional woman. Participants from the other HBCUs estimated that between 40% and 90% of students attending the coed HBCUs smoked cigarettes. Non-smoker participants did mention, that their classmates were more likely to smoke marijuana or other tobacco products, such as Black and Milds, than cigarettes.

Despite these seemingly high numbers, non-smokers stated that many HBCU females are ashamed or embarrassed to admit that they smoke cigarettes because it does not fit with various images of themselves or images that their colleges try to cultivate for their students. In addition, participants stated that African American men do not find it sexy for women to smoke and will purposefully avoid romantic relationships with women who smoke cigarettes. They concluded that some women may smoke without admitting that they do so.

Most of the non-smoker participants expressed a lack of tolerance for smokers. Many participants had definite rules about not talking to people unless they put out their cigarettes, not allowing people to smoke in their cars or homes, and not dating people who smoke. Several were also adamant about expressing their concerns regarding secondhand smoke to individuals who smoke near them. Only a few non-smokers stated that they were friends with people who smoke.

Most participants in both groups appeared to agree that smoking is more common among men than women; however, several respondents from the co-educational school stated that they were more likely to see women smoking on campus than men. They attributed this discrepancy to the higher number of female students on their campus. Both groups also agreed that women are more likely to conceal their cigarette smoking than men. According to these respondents, many female students smoke in their cars in parking lots or in other places where they are not readily visible.

How Influential Are Tobacco Advertisements?

HBCU female non-smokers reported seeing advertisements for cigarettes in the same places as HBCU smokers, including magazines such as *Jet!* and *Ebony*, billboards, and corner stores. Non-smoker participants viewed these advertisements as deliberate attempts by tobacco companies to deceive people about the negative health consequences of smoking. None of the participants described these images a "cool," "sexy," or "glamorous." Instead, they discussed their enjoyment and appreciation of the messages and strategies used in the anti-smoking "Truth" campaigns sponsored by the American Legacy Foundation. They liked the fact that many of the

commercials showed employees at tobacco companies with their faces concealed because they should be ashamed to work for a company that produces and promotes cigarettes.

HBCU female non-smokers also believed that peers are a stronger influence on a person's smoking behavior than advertisements. This is particularly salient for African American women who are more likely to see white women smoking than African American women, because they are less likely to imitate the behavior of white women than the behavior of their peers.

HBCU female non-smokers also expressed suspicions similar to those of the smoker groups about the motives behind anti-tobacco advertisements sponsored by tobacco companies.

How Have Tobacco Companies Advertised in the Places Where College Students Socialize?

In both groups, participants were not aware of the occurrence of any marketing or advertising efforts by tobacco companies on their campuses or any of the social settings they frequented. Very few stated that they traveled, other than to return home during spring break. However, several participants mentioned the internships offered at their schools by tobacco companies as a form of covert advertisement.

Why Do People Prefer Menthol or Non-Menthol Cigarettes?

Participants were unaware of the difference between menthol and non-menthol cigarettes; however, they were able to distinguish cigarettes by brands. Both groups agreed that most African Americans smoke brands that would be classified as menthol (e.g. Newport® and Kools®). The few that had tried a cigarette when they were younger recalled that the brand was menthol. Since neither group included former smokers, we were not able to explore the issue of personal or group preference for menthol cigarettes.

VI. Student Recommendations for Prevention and Cessation Messages and Strategies

All groups were asked to generate messages they thought might be effective in helping other young people like themselves to quit smoking. Every group believed strongly that little, if anything, could be said or done to help a person quit smoking if that person does not have a pre-existing desire to quit and the willpower and commitment to follow through. Given that bit of caution, the groups came up with the following messages and strategies.

Strategy #1: Understand What the College Time Period Means

One group of non-HBCU women described college as “the bachelor party before the wedding” to explain the carefree and daring attitude of many college students. For many students, their 4 years in college are their last chance to do all the things they cannot or should not do once they assume full adult status. In essence, it is their last chance to be wild and crazy without fear of consequences. This feeling, combined with their desire to be seen as adults, must be taken into consideration when designing communication messages for this audience.

Strategy #2: Emphasize Immediate and Short Term Health Consequences

One way that participants suggested to combat the “bachelor party attitude” is to emphasize the immediate and short-term health consequences of smoking instead of focusing on the long term effects, such as cancer. If college students understood how smoking cigarettes could affect their health in the next week, month or year, they might be more receptive to smoking prevention and cessation messages. However, none of the participants mentioned any short-term health consequences that would be strong enough to motivate young adults to quit.

Strategy #3: Focus on Early Prevention

The groups agreed that emphasis should be placed on preventing people from smoking their first cigarette, particularly in light of how difficult it is to convince smokers that they should stop. The participants did not have specific suggestions on how to accomplish this with young adults who begin smoking in college, but they did suggest more presentations of damaged lungs and other illnesses caused by smoking in elementary and middle schools. Many of them, especially HBCU female non-smokers, vividly recalled these presentations and thought they might help prevent younger children from smoking.

Strategy #4: Provide Alternatives to Cigarette Smoking

HBCU group participants stated that before messages can be effective we need to understand why a person chooses to smoke and what benefits they receive from it. With this knowledge we can then identify appropriate alternatives to smoking can be identified. For instance, if cigarettes function primarily as a stress reliever for someone, maybe that person could take up yoga or meditation instead. These groups also suggested that people keep busy as a way to avoid smoking. HBCU female non-smokers recommended helping people identify goals in their life they want to achieve that would be compromised by cigarette smoking as another deterrent.

Strategy #5: Remove Cigarettes from Circulation

One HBCU male group suggested that cigarettes selling be stopped altogether. This was seen as the only way to get people to stop smoking. This suggestion was challenged by those who thought that an expensive black market would result. It is interesting to note that although all of the groups stated that to stop smoking cigarettes is difficult for those who continue to drink alcohol or smoke marijuana, none of the groups suggested banning alcohol or marijuana.

Strategy #6: Legalize Marijuana

One HBCU male group called for the legalization of marijuana. Participants thought that if people had greater, legal access to marijuana, they would be less likely to smoke cigarettes as a substitute for marijuana.

Strategy #7: Publicize Disproportionate Impact of Cigarette Smoking

One group of HBCU males also thought that if African Americans, men in particular, understood the disproportionate impact of cigarette smoking on their health status, this would be effective. If African Americans understood they were more likely to become ill with or die of a smoking related disease than their Caucasian counterparts, they might be less willing to smoke.

Strategy#8: Publicize the Consumer Cost

Participants in several groups stated that they avoid thinking about how much money they spend on cigarettes on a monthly or yearly basis. If people were forced to confront the actual amount of money they spend and realize what they could have purchased instead, this might also influence their willingness to smoke.

Strategy #9: Ban cigarette smoking in movies

Participants suggested that if smoking were banned in movies, people, particularly teenagers and smokers, would be less tempted to smoke. This would also reduce the amount of glamour and sexiness currently associated with cigarette smoking.

Strategy #10: Require Stronger Warning Labels

In three groups, respondents described the deterrent effect on them of powerful warning labels on foreign cigarettes. They stated that these labels made them stop and think. One participant described how the warning labels, in conjunction with the higher price of cigarettes in London, made her stop smoking cigarettes while she was there. Another participant stated that Canada also had strong warning labels, which indicated to her that the Canadian government was more serious about the issue of tobacco regulation than the United States which is, in her opinion, less willing to forego the revenue from tobacco sales.

In addition to the strategies above, all participants were asked to react to three strategies suggested by the moderator. These strategies are outlined below.

Free Nicotine Patches

Most participants indicated that they would be unwilling to try nicotine patches if they were given out free, generally because of: (1) perceived harmful health effects of having something “seeping through their skin,” (2) perceived ineffectiveness; or (3) unfamiliarity with what is in it or how it works; and (4) the fact that patch does not replace, or pacify the desire for, the pleasure offered by the physical act of smoking.

Cigarette Price Increases

Participants were far more likely to believe that an increase in the price of cigarettes would discourage people from smoking than the availability of free nicotine patches. If prices were doubled or tripled, some said that they would have to quit. However, in all groups some participants said that they would just smoke fewer cigarettes and would be less inclined to give

them away. Some participants were doubtful that the policy would have the desired effect because of the strong possibility that a black market would emerge.

Counseling

Across all groups, participants did not think that offering counseling or other services to convince someone to try to stop smoking would be effective. Participants strongly believed that the key to smoking cessation is personal willpower and commitment. If individuals do not have these basic ingredients, counseling could not help them, especially if the counselor cannot be with the smoker 24 hours a day to help them fight the desire to smoke. Others did not think of smoking as a behavior that warranted individual counseling and believed that funds could be spent more wisely if used to fight other addictions, such as to crack cocaine.

VII. Summary of the Findings Across All Groups

- **The “social smoker.”** Across all groups, participants agreed that a large majority of the students who smoke in college can be thought of as “social smokers” who smoke primarily in social settings, such as parties, bars, and clubs. In most cases, these social smokers also consume alcohol, marijuana or other substances. Many of these smokers, particularly on HBCU campuses, do not identify themselves as smokers and are less likely to be worried about the long-term consequences of their smoking behavior.
- **College.** The college environment appears to be an important factor in the continuation and escalation of cigarette smoking for many students, but not necessarily in trying the first cigarette. The college setting provides an environment that is free of parental supervision and other restrictions that might have curtailed or limited a student’s previous smoking behavior. For many students, their college years are a safe time to experiment with new things, meet new people, and learn what being an adult means. As a result, college offers the last opportunity to be carefree and reckless before the assumption of adult responsibilities, such as a professional job, marriage, and children. The desire to succeed academically in college also plays a role, as many students smoke to cope with the stress of exams and term papers.
- **Autonomy and choice.** In all groups, participants described smoking cigarettes as a way to exercise personal autonomy and choice even if by their own admission, it is a bad choice. In this context, smoking cigarettes is akin to rebellion against parental and societal authority and an expression of individuality that is essential to becoming an adult. Many participants believed that once they graduated from college and “became an adult” they would no longer smoke cigarettes.
- **Family smoking as a model.** Many participants reported that having a close family member, particularly a parent or sibling, who smoked cigarettes was a major reason why they decided to try cigarettes for the first time. These participants stated that seeing their relatives smoke cigarettes made them curious about what it felt like to actually smoke a cigarette.
- **Peer influence on smoking initiation.** Peers were also a major influence on participants’ decisions to smoke a cigarette for the first time. Many of these participants thought that older peers or those in the “in crowd” looked “cool” when they smoked cigarettes and they wanted to look “cool” too.

- **Peers, but not family, encourage smoking continuation.** Although, family and peers were mentioned as having a major impact on participants' decision to start smoking, only peers emerged as strong influences on their decisions to continue smoking. Most participants reported that their parents were unaware that they smoked, were in denial, or actively disapproved of their smoking cigarettes. Parental disapproval, or the fear of parental disapproval, did not serve as a deterrent for these participants. Instead, many simply decided not to smoke in their parents' presence. Peers, on the other hand, often encouraged participants to smoke by either smoking in front of them or by making it easy for participants to "bum" a cigarette, even when they had decided not to purchase any of their own.

Participants also socialize with their peers in bars and clubs or at parties where alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking are common. For the HBCU female non-smokers, peers and family were also influential in their decisions not to smoke. Unlike the smokers, non-smokers frequently mentioned parental disapproval as a reason why they chose not to smoke and most of the non-smokers stated that they did not socialize with people who smoke cigarettes.

- **Alcohol and marijuana use.** Alcohol and marijuana use were strongly associated with smoking. In some cases, alcohol and marijuana use was the reason why participants decided to try smoking cigarettes. For others, especially social smokers, cigarettes are common in the settings where alcohol and marijuana are consumed and, in many respects, "go hand in hand" with drinking and smoking marijuana. Although participants acknowledged that some individuals smoke cigarettes but do not drink or use marijuana, they believed that stopping smoking cigarettes is very difficult for someone who continues to drink alcohol or smoke marijuana.
- **African Americans prefer menthol cigarettes.** Most participants agreed that African Americans tend to prefer menthol cigarettes and Caucasians tend to prefer non-menthol cigarettes. This difference in preference was most often explained by availability and familiarity. People tend to smoke the type of cigarette they started smoking, which is often the most readily available and popular cigarette in their peer group or community. For African Americans, this tends to be menthol and for Caucasians, non-menthol cigarettes. Participants also agreed that for African Americans smokers the brand of cigarette may be just as important as the type of cigarette in influencing preference.
- **Addiction is mental.** Although some participants stated that they were addicted to cigarettes, most believed that addiction is primarily a mental phenomenon. The group did not discuss nicotine and its addictive effects extensively. As a result of their beliefs about addiction, participants claimed that people with the "right amount" of desire, willpower and commitment, he/she can stop smoking cigarettes when they choose. This belief played a major role in why many participants were confident that they would not be smoking in 5 years.
- **Smokers are the best advertisement.** Participants strongly believed that seeing people smoke, including peers, family members, and movie and television stars, is the most effective form of advertisement. Not only does it spark curiosity, but the attractiveness and acceptability of smoking cigarettes increases when a person, particularly a young person, sees someone they admire smoking a cigarette and making it look "cool." As one participant stated, "[In the movies] you never see anyone coughing up a lung." Participants felt that even advertisements or movie characters that are designed to discourage smoking, like the Truth Campaign or the "Smoking Man" character on the popular television show "X-Files,"

encourage smokers to smoke because they either talk about smoking or actually show a person smoking a cigarette. According to participants, this type of visual cue can be extremely powerful in sparking a craving for a cigarette among smokers.

VIII. Summary of Major Differences Across Institutions and Gender

- **HBCU students were less likely than non-HBCU students to perceive their current smoking as a “college thing.”** When asked to discuss their reasons for continuing to smoke, HBCU students were less likely to describe college as a “safe place” in which to experiment with behaviors that might have negative consequences. Instead, HBCU students focused on situational and continual stress. They were also less likely to believe that they would not be smoking in 5 years, in large part due to their perception that the amount of stress in their lives will not have lessened in five years. HBCU students were also more likely to believe that their social lives would continue to involve alcohol or marijuana; therefore, cigarette smoking was inevitable.
- **HBCU students perceived greater levels of stigma associated with cigarette smoking on their college campus than did non-HBCU students.** Many HBCU participants stated that many students do not openly smoke on campus for fear of negative reactions from professors and peers. According to these participants, smoking cigarettes is viewed as a sign of weakness unbecoming of a future African American professional. Both male and female HBCU students also reported that smoking cigarettes is considered “unladylike” behavior and is viewed quite negatively. As a result, participants stated that many female HBCU smokers are “closet smokers” who either smoke in private or only smoke off campus at parties, bars or in other social settings.
- **Non-HBCU women and HBCU men were more likely to discuss smoking as a rebellious act than other groups.** Although rebellion was mentioned in every group as a reason to start smoking cigarettes, non-HBCU women and HBCU men had lengthy discussions of the defiant nature of smoking cigarettes, particularly as adolescents. Non-HBCU women also focused on the role cigarettes played in helping them assert their individuality and right to make choices with which others may disagree.
- **Non-HBCU groups focused more on the relationship between alcohol and cigarettes, while HBCU groups discussed marijuana and cigarettes.** The HBCU groups, particularly males, were more likely to discuss the relationship between marijuana and cigarettes, while the non-HBCU groups spoke almost exclusively about the relationship between alcohol and cigarettes. Both of these substances were described as “going hand in hand” with cigarettes; however, the nature of their relationship seemed to vary. Despite the stimulating effects mentioned by both HBCU and non-HBCU participants, alcohol and cigarettes appear to function more as companions whereas cigarettes were described as “boosting” the high associated with marijuana.
- **HBCU groups were more likely to discuss past and current use of other tobacco products, such as bidis and Black and Milds.** For several HBCU participants, the use of these products preceded their use of cigarettes. Both male and female HBCU students stated that these products were widely used on HBCU campuses, especially by men. HBCU participants also stated that individuals who smoke Black and Milds regularly are less likely to smoke cigarettes. Only one participant in the non-HBCU groups mentioned past use of a cigar product.

- **Males were more likely to disapprove of the opposite sex smoking cigarettes.** Males in both the HBCU and non-HBCU groups were more likely to state that they disapprove of women smoking. Women, on the other hand, tended not to mind if their partner smoked because it made it easier for them to smoke around him. Women in the non-HBCU and HBCU groups also stated that men tend to disapprove of women smoking and many of them concealed their smoking from their boyfriends or chose not to smoke in front of them for fear of embarrassment or disapproval. HBCU female non-smokers concurred with this assessment.
- **HBCU students were more likely to prefer the taste of menthol cigarettes than non-HBCU students.** Non-HBCU groups were more likely to regard menthol cigarettes as “harsh” and dislike the minty taste than HBCU students, who thought that non-menthol cigarettes were not strong enough and preferred the minty taste. HBCU students were also less likely to discuss perceived negative health effects associated with menthol cigarettes.
- **Non-HBCU participants were more likely to have encountered tobacco representatives than HBCU students.** Only one HBCU participant recalled seeing a tobacco company representative in a club or bar. The club he mentioned is known for attracting an interracial crowd. In almost every group of non-HBCU students, participants recalled seeing a “Camel[®] Man” or “Marlboro[®] Man” handing out free cigarettes in the bars and clubs they frequent, often in exchange for the completion of a short survey about their smoking behavior.

IX. Implication of Findings for Health Communication Messages

Focus groups offer rich insights for designing health communication and health education messages. Qualitative data combined with sound quantitative data can provide a good starting point for designing and disseminating effective messages. The following are some key themes, based on the suggestions of the students, that may be useful in reaching other college students:

- **Relating campus no-smoking policies to the school’s existing culture.** No-smoking policies on campus may be a strong influence on college student initiation or cessation. This appeared to be the case for female students from one HBCU where a clear-cut, campus wide smoking ban is enforced. Also, the culture of this HBCU—which emphasizes ladylike and professional behavior—appears to fit and support the policy. This integration of policy and social norm suggests that active campus policy initiatives, boosted from the start by effective health communication messages, have strong potential to influence a cultural shift and eventually set the stage for an effectively controlled smoking environment.
- **Some college students believe rebellion is a natural part of the college experience.** Many students perceive college as a safe, set-aside period of time to experiment with not only cigarette smoking and other “forbidden” behaviors, but also the concept of being an adult. According to participants, many college students do not see themselves as adults and often prefer it that way, as his perception allows them to make mistakes without paying the same price as “adults” do. It also allows them to believe that their “forbidden” behaviors will be confined to their college years, since these behaviors will be unacceptable and unproductive in their lives as adults. Health communication messages to this audience need to reflect this understanding of college as an important environmental factor in order to counteract the idea that smoking cigarettes is a relatively “safe,” temporary way to rebel or assert one’s identity.

- **The drug and alcohol culture is alive and well on campuses and is clearly linked to tobacco use.** The links between alcohol and cigarettes and marijuana and cigarettes need to be addressed. As many participants stated, stopping smoking is difficult if a person continues to drink alcohol or smoke marijuana. The high rates of marijuana and alcohol use among young adults in college present a formidable challenge for effective smoking cessation messages, especially if those messages occur independently of messages about binge drinking or marijuana use. A more comprehensive approach that allows health communicators and educators to integrate, not only the messages, but also the actual cessation programs for this audience may be needed to reduce the rates of cigarette smoking in this population.
- **The cigarette is a social crutch.** Another important component of cigarette smoking for students attending predominately white universities is the social aspect, particularly for females. Many of these participants discussed how smoking helps them develop platonic and romantic relationships. Cigarettes also help ease their anxiety in social situations. Health communication messages may need to offer these students a viable alternative.
- **“Black and Mild” generation?** For students attending HBCUs, it appears highly likely that failing to address the use of other tobacco products such as Black and Mild cigars and Bidis in addition to cigarettes would be a major omission. Since these products were not a focus of this study, these conversations do not indicate clearly why HBCU students use these products or what they think of the risks associated with them, but other studies address this phenomenon. Understanding more about stylish cigar use would likely boost health communication effectiveness on campuses. Students in these focus groups offered some insight on this issue. Several participants stated that they began smoking Black and Milds and then moved on to cigarettes. Others said that they preferred Black and Milds and only smoked cigarettes on an occasional basis in social settings.
- **Tobacco use is a justice issue.** Students’ comments suggest that students’ disdain for industry presence on their campuses should be tapped into, such as tobacco companies offering scholarships, jobs, or bricks-and-mortar financial support. Also, some students spoke passionately about the international market intrusion by the industry into struggling countries—suggesting a strong sense of social justice in college students, even those who smoke. Stock divestiture by university officials might be an engaging part of an anti-smoking campaign on campuses.
- **An inter-disciplinary approach is needed.** Overall, these findings are only a start. Health communicators, working in an interdisciplinary team with policy experts, epidemiologists, and health educators, would be well advised to test a variety of messages prior to dissemination, and to consider creating different messages for different audiences.

X. Recommendations for Future Study

- Focus groups conducted for this study were limited to students attending four-year, private residential colleges in the Atlanta area. To gain a better understanding of the experiences of all college students, quantitative and qualitative research is needed in other college settings and geographical locations. For instance, students who attend a 2-year commuter college in California, a state known for its strict public restrictions on tobacco use, may have very different experiences than the participants in these focus groups. Similarly, the smoking

behavior and attitudes of college students from other racial and ethnic minority groups, such as Latinos and Asian Americans, should also be included in future studies.

- Additional research should be conducted with African American college students who do not attend HBCUs to determine if their smoking behavior is similar to that of those who attend HBCUs, and if they face the same level of social stigma associated with cigarette smoking on HBCU campuses. One question to explore might be, “Do African American students at predominantly white campuses also perceive smoking as ‘unladylike’ for African American women?”
- Given the participants’ reports that the majority of smokers on their respective campuses are social smokers, this group warrants closer study to determine how to tailor health communication messages appropriately. This research should include the collection of epidemiological data to determine whether or not many of these social smokers become regular smokers or quit once they graduate from college. Qualitative research, such as focus groups and audience profiles, would also assist in understanding why college students choose to be social smokers and help to identify how social smokers differ from regular smokers in a college setting.
- The students in these groups reported that tobacco companies were not advertising on their respective campuses; however, whether this is actually the case, or if the same is true on other campuses is not known. If on-campus marketing is occurring, how tobacco companies conduct campus marketing campaigns and what messages they are promoting should be studied. The advertising may be subtle and not necessarily identifiable as coming from the tobacco industry. Also, ostensible industry efforts may be more prevalent off-campus, where they are less likely to be recognized by campus leaders, although students in the non-HBCU groups spoke knowledgeably about industry presence in their “night life.” Some campuses are already responding to students’ penchant for partying by offering alcohol- and tobacco-free campus events where students are free to revel without having substance use marketed and glamorized around them. However, if campus-based marketing is not occurring, then further investigation is needed to understand what avenues tobacco companies are using to target college students and whether these approaches vary among different racial and ethnic groups. Student groups that deserve attention in this regard include those with alternative sexual preferences, as this group was not included in this particular research effort.
- In all the groups—male and female, HBCU and non-HBCU—participants indicated that alcohol and marijuana are inextricably related to tobacco, either as a cause of or reason to continue smoking cigarettes. This clear relationship to drugs and alcohol raises the question of whether young adult college smokers who smoke almost always choose marijuana and alcohol use as well; or whether there are some groups of students who choose to be “smokers” but not to use alcohol or marijuana. Are college students who smoke tobacco products almost always users of alcohol and drugs? Are they heavier users of alcohol and drugs, given that they report that tobacco products boost the “buzz” of alcohol and marijuana? How much of a predictor is tobacco product use of marijuana use, or heavy alcohol use? These questions are beyond the scope of this study, but they warrant future research.

Appendix A

College Young Adult Smokers Focus Group Discussion Guide

COLLEGE SMOKERS FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Introduction to Group Processes and Procedures (10 minutes)

Thank you for taking the time to be here. My name is _____ and I work for _____. I want to take a few minutes to tell you what to expect from our discussion tonight and then I'll give everyone the chance to introduce themselves.

As you may recall from when you were recruited, we are conducting this focus group study on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to understand college students' attitudes toward and behavior regarding smoking. Specifically, they want to learn what factors influence a college student's decision to start and continue smoking.

My role is to simply facilitate the discussion, make sure we stay on topic, and keep us within our 2-hour time limit. I am not here to push any particular agenda or point of view, but rather to hear your frank and honest opinions. There are no right or wrong answers, and nothing to be ashamed of. We all have our own likes and dislikes, our own thoughts and feelings. We merely want to identify what factors you think play a role in why people start smoking and continue smoking.

I want to remind everyone that the discussion here is confidential. We will not report your comments by name, and we ask that you respect one another's privacy in the same way. We don't expect you to tell us anything that you would be uncomfortable sharing with the group. But we do hope that you will be honest with your responses to the questions I ask.

Before we begin, I need to give you the informed consent form. Let's read it together and then I'll ask you to sign it. Most importantly, I want to make sure that you understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary. That means you can leave at any time.

***Moderator:** Review and collect informed consent form.*

I'm going to ask a series of questions, but mainly I want to hear from you. As I mentioned, my role is simply to guide the discussion. Sometimes we may really get going on one question, and I'll have to move you on to the next question so that we may cover everything. Please don't take it personally! We just need to hear from everyone about several topics.

***Moderator:** Review ground rules like:*

- Participate as you feel comfortable
- Allow/encourage everyone to participate
- Remember that disagreement is OK

Most importantly, please try to speak up, speak clearly, and one at a time, if possible. Remember we are audiotaping the discussion so that we can have an accurate record of the discussion.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Participant Introductions and Warm-up Exercise (5 minutes)

So we can get to know each other a little, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please tell us your name, your hometown, your year in school, and your major or concentration.

Thank you. Now, let's get started with our discussion.

Discussion Questions (1 hour, 45 minutes)

I. Background (5 minutes)

1. Can you describe a typical smoker at your school?

Probe: Are there certain "types" of students who are more likely to be smokers?

Probe: Certain majors? Certain class years—freshmen versus seniors?

II. Factors Related to Smoking Initiation (25 minutes)

Now let's talk about your personal smoking habits.

2. Tell us about the first time you smoked a cigarette.

Probe: Where were you? Who was there with you? How did you get the cigarettes? How did you feel?

3. Why did you start smoking?

Probe: What factors influenced or contributed to your decision to smoke?

Moderator: List on flipchart.

4. Why do you continue to smoke?

Moderator: If list differs from list created in 3, create new list.

5. How many cigarettes a day do you smoke?

6. Have you ever tried to quit smoking? Why or why not?

7. For those of you who have tried to quit smoking, what happened?

Probe: What makes it difficult for a person your age to stop smoking?

8. For those of you who are social smokers, do you think you will be smoking 5 years from now? Why or why not?

III. Factors Related to Current Smoking Behavior (15 minutes)

For the next part of the discussion, I'd like for us to talk about your social network and the social environment at your school.

9. How common is smoking among students at your school?

Probe: What percentage of students smoke at your school?

Probe: How often do you see people smoking on campus?

10. Is smoking more common among females or males at your school?

11. Are there restrictions on where or when you can smoke? If so, what are they?

Probe: How do you or would you feel about smoke-free dorms?

12. How do non-smokers react to people who smoke at your school?

13. How do your family, friends, and significant other feel about your smoking?

Moderator: When they answer, ask them to specify if they are referring to friends or family and then get them to talk about each one separately.

Probe: How do their feelings affect the way you feel about smoking?

IV. Influence of Advertising (30 minutes)

14. Where do you usually see advertisements for cigarettes? On or near campus? Other places?

15. What images or messages do you recall from the advertisements? How do you feel about those images?

16. What, if any, influence do you think the ads have on teenagers' decisions to start or continue smoking?
17. Are there any events on your campus sponsored by tobacco companies? If so, what kind of events are they?
18. What, if any, effect do you think tobacco companies' sponsorship has on whether or not people at your school smoke?
19. Are there any events at clubs or bars sponsored by tobacco companies? If so, what kind of events are they?

Probe: Have you ever seen tobacco representatives at clubs or bars? What are they doing?
20. Have you noticed any advertisements or events sponsored by tobacco companies at places where students go during spring break?

V. Factors Related to Brand/Menthol Preference (10 minutes)

For the next part of the discussion, let's hear your opinions on people's preferences for different types of cigarettes. While I know there are many different brands of cigarettes, whenever I say "types" or "kinds" of cigarettes, I want you to only think of either menthol or non-menthol, not specific brands.

21. When you first started smoking, how many of you smoked menthol cigarettes? Non-menthol?
22. Why did you choose that type (i.e., the type of cigarettes you first started smoking)?

Moderator: Record on flipchart the number who smoked each kind and the reasons they stated.

23. Do you smoke a different kind of cigarettes now? If yes, why did you switch?

Probe: What do you like about the kind of cigarettes you are smoking now?

24. Have you ever heard of or used Eclipse?

Probe: What do you know about it? How common is it? Who uses it?

25. Do you think people who smoke menthol cigarettes are “different” from those who don’t? Why or why not?

Probe: Are there certain “types” of people who are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than non-menthol cigarettes?

Probe: Race? SES? Gender?

26. Is one type of cigarette more popular than the other at your school? Menthol or non-menthol?

27. Why do you think people prefer one or the other type of cigarette?

VI. Smoking Cessation Messages (10 minutes)

Remember when I asked you whether or not you had ever tried to quit smoking? For the last part of the discussion, I’d like to explore the idea of quitting smoking a little more. In particular, I want to know if you have any suggestions on how to help someone your age who wants to stop smoking. Now, I am not pushing the idea of quitting and I do not want you to walk away from this group thinking that our agenda was to get you to stop smoking. We just think that you have valuable information and ideas to offer on this issue. So, as a group, I want you to talk through some ideas for a message that might convince someone to try and stop smoking. Can I get a volunteer to lead the discussion and write your ideas on the flipchart?

False Close—Moderator: *Step out of room and check in with observers.*

28. Do you have any suggestions on how to help someone who wants to stop smoking?

Probe: Can you think of any messages that might convince someone to try and stop smoking?

Probe: What if patches were given out free?

Probe: What if the price of cigarettes were doubled or tripled?

Probe: What if counseling or other services were offered?

VII. Clarification Requested by Observers (5 minutes)

Moderator: *Ask additional questions requested by observers*

VIII. Closing (5 minutes)

Well, that's the last of my questions. Do you have any questions?

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this discussion. We sincerely appreciate and value your input.

Appendix B

**College Smokers
Focus Group Recruitment Screener**

COLLEGE SMOKERS FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT SCREENER

Hello. I'm with ORC Macro, a research and consulting firm here in Atlanta. We are doing a study on behalf of the CDC to learn what factors influence college students' attitudes and behavior regarding smoking. As part of this study, we are planning a 2-hour discussion group of about six-eight college students and we would like for you to participate in it. Every person who participates in the discussion will receive \$50 cash in appreciation of his or her time and willingness to talk with us, plus a small amount to cover transportation costs. We will also serve a light meal during the discussion. Do you think you might be interested in participating in this kind of a discussion?

Would you mind if I ask you a few questions in order to determine whether or not you can participate in the discussion group?

1. Record institution:

- Spelman Clark-Atlanta Morehouse Emory

2. Record gender:

- Female Male

3. How old are you? _____

If not between 18 and 24, thank person for or his/her time and end conversation

4. Are you currently enrolled in college?

- Yes No

If "No," thank person for his/her time and end conversation

4a. In what college are you enrolled?

- Spelman Clark-Atlanta Morehouse Emory Other

If "Other," thank person for his/her time and end conversation

5. Are you an undergraduate or a graduate student?

- Undergraduate Graduate

If "Graduate," thank person for his or her time and end conversation

6. Do you smoke cigarettes?

- Yes No

If "No," thank person for his or her time and end conversation

7. Have you smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days?

- Yes No

If "No," thank person for his or her time and end conversation

8. How do you describe yourself? (*Mark one or more*)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
 Asian
 Black or African American
 Hispanic or Latino(a)
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 White
 Other _____

9. Would you be comfortable discussing your ideas and experiences about cigarette smoking with five-seven other people for approximately 2 hours?

- Yes No

If "No," thank the person for his or her time and end conversation

10. Are you still interested in participating in our group discussion?

- Yes No

If "No," thank the person for his or her time and end conversation

I'm glad that you will be able to join us! We want to hear your thoughts to help us understand what factors influence young adults' attitudes and behavior regarding smoking.

The discussion groups will be held at Nordhaus Research Inc., located on Lenox Road across from the mall, next to Ruby Tuesdays, and can be easily reached by car or by Marta. In addition to the \$50 you will receive for participation, we will also give you a small amount (approximately \$3) to cover your transportation costs.

The group in which we would like for you to participate is scheduled for:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male students from Morehouse | Tuesday, April 10, 2001, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male students from Morehouse | Wednesday, April 11, 2001, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male students from Emory | Wednesday, April 4, 2001, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male students from Emory | Thursday, April 5, 2001, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. |

- Female students from Spelman/Clark Tuesday, April 10, 2001, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- Female students from Spelman/Clark Tuesday, April 17, 2001, 4:00 - 6:00 p.m.

- Female students from Emory Wednesday, April 4, 2001, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- Female students from Emory Thursday, April 5, 2001, 3:00 - 5:00 p.m.

Does this date and time work for you?

- Yes No

If "No," thank the person for his or her time and end conversation

In addition to the \$50 you will get for participating in the group, we will also be conducting an early bird Raffle. If you arrive for the group at least 15 minutes early (before the group is scheduled to begin), you will be entered into the raffle. The drawing will take place at the beginning of the group and the winner will receive an extra \$25. So, we encourage you to get there as early as possible! Don't forget that we will serve you a light meal.

Give the person an appointment sheet and directions/map. Here is your appointment sheet that indicates the date and time of your discussion group, with directions and map on the back. We would also like to be able to give you a reminder before the group. Can you please give me your name, phone number, and e-mail?

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Pager:** _____

E-mail: _____

A name and number are included on your appointment sheet if you need more information. Also, call if your plans change so that we may invite someone from the waiting list to attend instead. Otherwise, we'll look forward to seeing you on _____ (*insert date and time from above*).

Appendix C

College Smokers Focus Group Flyer

Come Talk with Us!

Thank you for agreeing to join our group to discuss young adults' attitudes and behavior regarding smoking. We are very interested in hearing your thoughts. The discussion will last about 2 hours. During the discussion, we will serve you a light meal and, at the end of the discussion, we will give you \$50 to thank you for your time and willingness to talk with us. We will also give you a small amount (approximately \$3) to cover your transportation costs. Remember, if you arrive at or before _____, you will be eligible to participate in the Early Bird Raffle, which will give you a chance to win an extra \$25!

Your focus group discussion will be held on:

DAY: _____

DATE: _____

TIME: _____



The discussion will be held at:

**NORDHAUS RESEARCH, INC.
3555 LENOX ROAD, STE. 400**

(see back for directions and a map)

If you have any questions or you can't make it,
please call Jennifer McLaren at 404-321-3211.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Appendix D

College Smokers Pre-discussion Information Sheet

COLLEGE SMOKERS FOCUS GROUPS PRE-DISCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET

We appreciate your taking the time to give us some additional background information about you by completing this short questionnaire. We will not report any of your responses by name, so please do not write your name on the survey. Your completed survey will be collected from you before you enter the discussion.

1. How old are you? _____

2. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

3. How do you describe yourself? *(please check all that apply)*
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - Asian
 - Hispanic or Latino(a)
 - White
 - Other _____ *(please specify)*

4. What year are you in school?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior

5. When did you smoke a cigarette for the first time?
 - In elementary school
 - In middle school
 - In high school
 - In college

6. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?
- 0 days (*skip to # 13*)
 - 1 or 2 days
 - 3 to 5 days
 - 6 to 9 days
 - 10 to 19 days
 - 20 to 29 days
 - All 30 days
7. During the past 30 days, on the days you smoked, how many cigarettes did you smoke per day?
- Less than 1 cigarette per day
 - 1 cigarette per day
 - 2 to 5 cigarettes per day
 - 6 to 10 cigarettes per day
 - 11 to 20 cigarettes per day
 - More than 20 cigarettes per day
8. How long have you been an occasional (some days) or regular (every day) cigarette smoker?
- Less than 1 year
 - 1-3 years
 - 4 or more years
9. Have you ever stopped smoking cigarettes for 24 hours because you were trying to quit?
- Yes
 - No
- If "Yes," how many times have you tried to quit smoking cigarettes in the past year?
- 1 or 2
 - 3 or 4
 - 5 or more
 - No
10. Do you prefer menthol or non-menthol cigarettes?
- Menthol
 - Non-Menthol
 - No preference

11. What brand and type of cigarettes do you usually smoke? (e.g., Virginia Slims Lights 100s)

Brand: _____ (e.g., Virginia Slims)

Type: _____ (e.g., Lights 100s)

12. Have you ever ordered cigarettes over the Internet?

- Yes
- No

13. How many of your close friends smoke cigarettes?

- All
- Almost all
- Some
- Almost none
- None

This is the end of the survey. Thank you for taking the time to complete it.

Appendix E
College Smokers
Informed Consent Form

COLLEGE SMOKERS INFORMED CONSENT

ORC Macro is conducting a focus group study on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help them understand why college students start smoking, and what factors influence college students to continue smoking. We are asking you to participate in a 2-hour discussion with other students from your school who, like you, identified themselves as cigarette smokers. A report of the results from all of the discussions will be made to CDC. If you agree to join in this discussion, here are some things you should know:

Participation in this group discussion is completely voluntary.

- Any questions you have about this study will be answered before the group discussion begins.
- The discussion will be audiotaped.
- The discussion will be observed by project staff from both ORC Macro and CDC.
- Your name will not be used in any reports about this group and no quotes will be attributed to you.
- You may choose to leave the group at any time, for whatever reason.
- You will receive \$50 to compensate you for your time and a small amount to reimburse you for transportation costs.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above and agree to participate in this group.

Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F

College Smokers Pre-discussion Information Sheet Results

COLLEGE PRE-DISCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET RESULTS

Focus group participants were given a pre-discussion information sheet upon their arrival at the focus group facility. The information sheet included 13 questions designed to obtain demographic information and descriptive, quantitative information about their smoking habits. The results appear below by question.

1. How old are you?

Age	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
18	3	3	1	2	9
19	2	0	3	3	8
20	3	0	4	7	14
21	6	8	2	4	20
22	2	0	4	0	6
23	0	1	0	0	1
24	0	0	0	0	0
Missing	0	2	0	0	2
Total	16	14	14	16	60

2. What is your gender?

Gender	HBCU	Non-HBCU	Total
Male	16	14	30
Female	14	16	30
Total	30	30	60

3. How do you describe yourself?

Race/Ethnicity	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
American Indian/Alaska Native	2	0	0	0	2
Black/African American	12	11	1	0	24
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0	0	0	1	1
Asian	0	0	1	1	2
Hispanic/Latino(a)	0	0	1	0	1
White	1	0	8	14	23
Multiracial	1	2	1	0	4
Other	0	0	1	0	1
Missing	0	1	1	0	2
Total	16	14	14	16	60

4. What year are you in school?

Year in School	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Freshman	6	3	2	2	13
Sophomore	2	2	0	7	11
Junior	5	6	5	5	21
Senior	3	2	5	2	12
Missing	0	1	2	0	3
Total	16	14	14	16	60

5. When did you smoke a cigarette for the first time?

When Started Smoking	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Elementary school	0	1	1	0	2
Middle school	5	5	5	7	22
High school	7	4	7	5	23
College	4	3	1	4	12
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

6. During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?

Number of Days Smoked	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1 or 2 days	0	1	1	1	3
3 to 5 days	2	2	3	2	9
6 to 9 days	3	1	3	1	8
10 to 19 days	0	0	2	3	5
20 to 29 days	4	4	1	6	15
All 30 days	7	4	4	3	18
Missing	0	2	0	0	2
Total	16	14	14	16	60

7. During the past 30 days, on the days you smoked, how many cigarettes did you smoke per day?

Cigarettes Smoked	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
<1 per day	1	1	1	2	5
1 per day	3	1	0	1	5
2 to 5 per day	7	9	10	5	31
6 to 10 per day	4	2	0	6	12
11 to 20 per day	1	0	3	2	6
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

8. How long have you been an occasional (some days) or regular (every day) cigarette smoker?

How Long Smoking	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
< 1 year	2	3	1	2	8
1 to 3 years	11	6	6	11	34
4 + years	3	4	7	3	17
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

9. Have you ever stopped smoking cigarettes for 24 hours because you were trying to quit?

	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Ever Tried to Quit					
Yes	11	6	6	8	31
No	5	7	8	8	28
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

If “Yes”, how many times have you tried to quit smoking cigarettes in the past year?

	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Times Tried to Quit					
1 or 2	5	1	3	2	11
3 or 4	5	4	2	6	17
5 or more	1	0	1	0	2
Missing	0	3	0	0	3
Total	11	8	6	8	33

10. Do you prefer menthol or non-menthol cigarettes?

	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Menthol/Non-Menthol Preference					
Menthol	9	9	2	0	20
Non-Menthol	2	1	10	15	28
No Preference	5	3	2	1	11
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

11. What brand and type of cigarettes do you usually smoke?

Brand Preference	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Camel	2	0	5	8	15
Marlboro	3	1	7	8	19
Newports	8	8	1	0	17
Djarum/Cloves	1	1	0	0	2
Winston	0	0	1	0	1
Sampoerna	0	1	0	0	1
Capri	0	2	0	0	2
Parliament	0	0	1	1	2
Missing	2	2	1	0	5
Total*	16	15	16	17	64

* Respondents were allowed to write more than one response.

12. Have you ever ordered cigarettes over the Internet?

Purchase Cigarettes via Internet	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Yes	0	0	2	3	5
No	16	13	12	13	54
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

13. How many of your close friends smoke cigarettes?

How Many Friends Smoke	HBCU		Non-HBCU		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
All	1	1	0	0	2
Almost all	5	2	7	3	17
Some	9	8	5	11	33
Almost none	1	2	1	2	6
None	0	0	1	0	1
Missing	0	1	0	0	1
Total	16	14	14	16	60

Appendix G

College Young Adult Non-smokers Focus Group Discussion Guide

COLLEGE YOUNG ADULT NON-SMOKERS FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Introduction to Group Processes and Procedures (10 minutes)

Thank you for taking the time to be here. My name is _____ and I work for _____. I want to take a few minutes to tell you what to expect from our discussion tonight and then I'll give everyone the chance to introduce themselves.

As you may recall from when you were recruited, we are conducting this focus group study on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to understand college students' attitudes toward and behavior regarding smoking. Specifically, they want to learn what factors influence a college student's decision not to smoke.

My role is to simply facilitate the discussion, make sure we stay on topic, and keep us within our 2-hour time limit. I am not here to push any particular agenda or point of view, but rather to hear your frank and honest opinions. There are no right or wrong answers, and nothing to be ashamed of. We all have our own likes and dislikes, our own thoughts and feelings. We merely want to identify what factors you think play a role in why you choose not to smoke.

I want to remind everyone that the discussion here is confidential. We will not report your comments by name, and we ask that you respect one another's privacy in the same way. We don't expect you to tell us anything that you would be uncomfortable sharing with the group. But we do hope that you will be honest with your responses to the questions I ask.

Before we begin, I need to give you the informed consent form. Let's read it together and then I'll ask you to sign it. Most importantly, I want to make sure that you understand your participation in this study is completely voluntary. That means you can leave at any time.

***Moderator:** Review and collect informed consent form*

I'm going to ask a series of questions, but mainly I want to hear from you. As I mentioned, my role is simply to guide the discussion. Sometimes we may really get going on one question, and I'll have to move you on to the next question so that we may cover everything. Please don't take it personally! We just need to hear from everyone about several topics.

***Moderator:** Review ground rules like:*

- Participate as you feel comfortable
- Allow/encourage everyone to participate
- Remember that disagreement is OK

Most importantly, please try to speak up, speak clearly, and one at a time, if possible. Remember we are audiotaping the discussion so that we can have an accurate record of the discussion.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Participant Introductions and Warm-up Exercise (5 minutes)

So we can get to know each other a little, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. Please tell us your name, your hometown, your year in school, and your major or concentration.

Thank you. Now, let's get started with our discussion.

Discussion Questions (1 hour, 45 minutes)

I. Background (5 minutes)

1. Can you describe a typical non-smoker at your school?
2. Can you describe a typical smoker at your school?

Probe: Are there certain "types" of students who are more likely to be smokers?

Probe: Certain majors? Certain class years? Freshmen versus seniors?

II. Factors Related to Smoking Initiation (35 minutes)

Now let's talk about you and why you have chosen not to smoke. But first, I would like to ask you a few questions about your past behavior.

3. Have you ever tried a cigarette, even a puff?
4. For those of you who have tried cigarettes, tell us about the first time you smoked a cigarette.

Probe: Where were you? Who was there with you? How did you get the cigarettes?
How did you feel?

5. After that first cigarette, did you start smoking regularly? Why or why not?

Probe: What factors influenced or contributed to your decision to smoke?

Moderator: List reasons why they do NOT smoke on flipchart

6. Why did you decide not to keep smoking?

Moderator: List responses on flipchart

7. For those of you who have smoked and then quit, why did you quit? Was it difficult?

Moderator: List responses on flip chart

8. For those of you who have never tried a cigarette, why not? Why did you decide not to even try a cigarette?

Probe: Lack of interest, no one offered, no opportunity, fear of parents

Moderator: List responses on flip chart

9. Tell us how you handled a situation where you were offered a cigarette and refused?

III. Factors Related to Current Smoking Behavior at Your School (25 minutes)

For the next part of the discussion, I'd like for us to talk about your social network and the social environment at your school.

10. How common is smoking among students at your school?

Probe: What percentage of students smoke at your school?

Probe: How often do you see people smoking on campus?

11. We have had a lot of trouble recruiting African American female college students who smoke. Why do you think that is?

Probe: Low incidence, unwillingness to admit smoking, stigma, high numbers of social smokers?

Moderator: List reasons on the flip chart

12. Do you think smoking is more common among females or males at the AU Center?

13. Are there restrictions on where or when people can smoke? If so, what are they?

Probe: How do you or would you feel about smoke-free dorms?

14. Are cigarettes readily available on or near campus? If so, what brands do you usually see?

15. How do non-smokers react to people who smoke at your school? How do you react?
16. How do your family, friends, and significant others feel about your decision not to smoke?
17. How would your family, friends, and significant other feel about you smoking if you were a smoker?

***Moderator:** When they answer, ask them to specify if they are referring to friends or family and then get them to talk about each one separately.*

***Probe:** How do their feelings affect the way you feel about smoking?*

***Probe:** Do they smoke themselves?*

IV. Influence of Advertising (15 minutes)

18. Where do you usually see advertisements for cigarettes? On or near campus? Other places?
19. What images or messages do you recall from the advertisements? How do you feel about those images?
20. What, if any, influence do you think the ads have on teenagers' decisions to start or continue smoking?
21. Are there any events on your campus sponsored by tobacco companies? If so, what kind of events are they?
22. Are there any events at clubs or bars sponsored by tobacco companies? If so, what kind of events are they?

***Probe:** Have you ever seen tobacco representatives at clubs or bars? What are they doing?*

23. What, if any, effect do you think tobacco companies' sponsorship has on whether or not people at your school smoke?
24. Have you noticed any advertisements or events sponsored by tobacco companies at places where students go during spring break?

V. Factors Related to Brand/Menthol Preference (10 minutes)

For the next part of the discussion, let's hear your opinions on people's preferences for different types of cigarettes. While I know there are many different brands of cigarettes, whenever I say

“types” or “kinds” of cigarettes, I want you to only think of either menthol or non-menthol, not specific brands.

25. If you ever smoked, how many of you smoked menthol cigarettes? Non-menthol? Have any of you ever smoked menthol cigarettes? If so, why did you choose menthol?
26. Why do you think people choose menthol cigarettes?

27. Do you think people who smoke menthol cigarettes are “different” from those who don’t? Why or why not?

Probe: Are there certain “types” of people who are more likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than non-menthol cigarettes?

Probe: Race? SES? Gender?

Moderator: Record on flipchart the number who smoked each kind and the reasons they stated.

28. Is one type of cigarette more popular than the other at your school? Menthol or non-menthol?

29. Why do you think people prefer one or the other type of cigarette?

30. Have you ever heard of or used Eclipse?

Probe: What do you know about it? How common is it? Who uses it?

VI. Smoking Cessation Messages (10 minutes)

For the last part of the discussion, I’d like to explore the idea of quitting smoking a little more. In particular, I want to know if you have any suggestions on how to help someone your age who wants to stop smoking. Now, I am not pushing the idea of quitting and I do not want you to walk away from this group thinking that our agenda was to get you to stop smoking. We just think that you have valuable information and ideas to offer on this issue. So, as a group, I want you to talk through some ideas for a message that might convince someone to try and stop smoking. Can I get a volunteer to lead the discussion and write your ideas on the flipchart.

False Close—Moderator: Step out of room and check in with observers.

31. Do you have any suggestions on how to help someone who wants to stop smoking?

Probe: Can you think of any messages that might convince someone to try and stop smoking?

Probe: What if patches were given out free?

Probe: What if the price of cigarettes were doubled or tripled?

Probe: What if counseling or other services were offered?

VII. Clarification Requested by Observers (5 minutes)

Moderator: Ask additional questions requested by observers.

VIII. Closing (5 minutes)

Well, that's the last of my questions. Do you have any questions?

**Thank you again for taking the time to participate in this discussion.
We sincerely appreciate and value your input.**

Appendix H

Smoking and Non-smoking HBCU Female College Students Focus Groups Recruitment Screener

SMOKING AND NON-SMOKING HBCU FEMALE COLLEGE STUDENTS FOCUS GROUPS RECRUITMENT SCREENER

Hello. I'm with ORC Macro, a research and consulting firm here in Atlanta. We are doing a study on behalf of the CDC to learn what factors influence young adults' attitudes and behavior regarding smoking. As part of this study, we are planning a 2-hour discussion group of about 6–8 young adults and we would like for you to participate in it. Every person who participates in the discussion will receive \$50 cash in appreciation of his or her time and willingness to talk with us, plus a small amount to cover transportation costs. We will also serve a light meal during the discussion. Do you think you might be interested in participating in this kind of a discussion?

Would you mind if I ask you a few questions in order to determine whether or not you can participate in the discussion group?

1. Record institution:

- Spelman Clark-Atlanta Morris Brown

2. How old are you? _____

If not between 18 and 24, thank person for his or her time and end conversation

3. Are you currently enrolled in college?

- Yes No

If "No," thank person for his or her time and end conversation

3a. In what college are you enrolled?

- Spelman Clark-Atlanta Morris Brown Other

If "Other," thank person for his or her time and end conversation

4. Are you an undergraduate or a graduate student?

- Undergraduate Graduate

If "Graduate," thank person for his or her time and end conversation.

5. Do you smoke cigarettes?

- Yes No

If "No," skip to question 7.

6. Have you smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days?

- Yes No

If "No," thank person for his or her time and end conversation

If "Yes," skip to question 8.

7. Have you smoked a cigarette in the past 6 months?

- Yes No

If "Yes," thank person for his or her time and end conversation.

8. Do you plan on smoking a cigarette in the next 6 months?

- Yes No

If "Yes," disqualify the person from the non-smoker group.

9. How do you describe yourself? (*Mark one or more*)

- American Indian or Alaska Native Asian
 Black or African American Hispanic or Latino(a)
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander White
 Other _____

10. Would you be comfortable discussing your ideas and experiences about cigarette smoking with five to seven other people for approximately 2 hours?

- Yes No

If "No," thank the person for his/her time and end conversation

11. Are you still interested in participating in our group discussion?

- Yes No

If "No," thank the person for his or her time and end conversation

I'm glad that you will be able to join us! We want to hear your thoughts to help us understand what factors influence young adults' attitudes and behaviors regarding smoking.

The discussion groups will be held at Nordhaus Research Inc. located on Lenox Road across from the mall, next to Ruby Tuesdays, and can be easily reached by car or by Marta. In addition to the \$50 you will receive for participation, we will also give you a small amount (approximately \$3) to cover your transportation costs.

The group in which we would like for you to participate is scheduled for:

- HBCU Female non-smokers Tuesday, October 9, 2001, 3:00-5:00 pm
 HBCU Female non-smokers Tuesday, October 9, 2001, 6:00-8:00 pm
 HBCU Female smokers Thursday, October 11, 2001 3:00-5:00 pm

Does this date and time work for you?

Yes No

If "No," thank the person for his/her time and end conversation

In addition to the \$50 you will get for participating in the group, we will also be conducting an early bird raffle. If you arrive for the group at least 15 minutes early (before the group is scheduled to begin), you will be entered into the raffle. The drawing will take place at the beginning of the group and the winner will receive an extra \$25. So, we encourage you to get there as early as possible! Don't forget that we will serve you a light meal.

Give the person an appointment sheet and directions and map. Here is your appointment sheet that indicates the date and time of your discussion group, with directions and map on the back. We would also like to be able to give you a reminder before the group. Can you please give me your name, phone number, and e-mail?

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Telephone: _____ **Pager:** _____

E-mail: _____

A name and number are included on your appointment sheet if you need more information. Also, call if your plans change so that we may invite someone from the waiting list to attend instead. Otherwise, we'll look forward to seeing you on _____ (*insert date and time from above*)."

Appendix I

College Young Adult Non-smoker Pre-discussion Information Sheet

COLLEGE YOUNG ADULT NON-SMOKER PRE-DISCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET

We appreciate your taking the time to give us some additional background information about you by completing this short screener. We will not report any of your responses by name, so please do not write your name on the survey. Your completed survey will be collected from you before you enter the discussion.

1. How old are you? _____

2. How do you describe yourself? *(please check all that apply)*
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - Asian
 - Hispanic or Latino(a)
 - White
 - Other _____(please specify)

3. What year are you in school?
 - Freshman
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior

4. Have you ever tried a cigarette even a puff?
 - Yes
 - No (If No, skip to question 13)

5. If yes, when did you smoke a cigarette for the first time?
 - In elementary school
 - In middle school
 - In high school
 - In college

6. Have you ever been a regular (every day) cigarette smoker?
- Yes → go to question 13.
 - No
7. Have you ever been an occasional (some days) cigarette smoker?
- Yes
 - No → go to question 13.
8. If yes, for how long?
- Less than 1 year
 - 1-3 years
 - 4 or more years
9. When you smoked, on the days you smoked, how many cigarettes did you smoke per day?
- Less than 1 cigarette per day
 - 1 cigarette per day
 - 2 to 5 cigarettes per day
 - 6 to 10 cigarettes per day
 - 11 to 20 cigarettes per day
 - More than 20 cigarettes per day
10. When you smoked, what kind of cigarette did you prefer?
- Menthol
 - Non-Menthol
 - No preference
11. What brand and type of cigarettes did you usually smoke? (*e.g., Virginia Slims Lights 100s*)
- Brand:** _____ (*e.g., Virginia Slims*)
- Type:** _____ (*e.g., Lights 100s*)
12. How many times did you try to quit before you were successful?
- 1 or 2
 - 3 or 4
 - 5 or more

13. How many of your close friends smoke cigarettes?

- All
- Almost all
- Some
- Almost none
- None

14. Do any of your close family members smoke cigarettes?

- Yes
- No

If “Yes,” which family members smoke cigarettes? *(Please check all that apply)*

- Parent/guardian
- Brother/sister
- Aunt/uncle
- Grandparent

This is the end of the screener. Thank you for taking the time to complete it.

Appendix J

Informed Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT

ORC Macro is conducting a focus group study on behalf of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help them understand why college students start smoking, and what factors influence college students to continue smoking. We are asking you to participate in a 2-hour discussion with other students who, like you, identified themselves as non-smokers. A report of the results from all of the discussions will be made to CDC. If you agree to join in this discussion, here are some things you should know:

- Participation in this group discussion is completely voluntary.
- Any questions you have about this study will be answered before the group discussion begins.
- The discussion will be audiotaped.
- The discussion will be observed by project staff from both ORC Macro and CDC.
- Your name will not be used in any reports about this group and no quotes will be attributed to you.
- You may choose to leave the group at any time, for whatever reason.
- You will receive \$50 to compensate you for your time and a small amount to reimburse you for transportation costs.

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above and agree to participate in this group.

Signature: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix K

College Non-smokers Pre-discussion Information Sheet Results

COLLEGE NON-SMOKER PRE-DISCUSSION INFORMATION SHEET RESULTS

Focus group participants were given a pre-discussion information sheet upon their arrival at the focus group facility. The information sheet included 13 questions designed to obtain demographic information and descriptive, quantitative information about their smoking habits. The results appear below by question.

1. How old are you?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
18	2	3	5
19	3	5	8
20	2	0	2
21	1	1	2
Total	8	9	17

2. How do you describe yourself?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0	0
Black or African American	8	9	17
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0	0
Asian	0	0	0
Hispanic or Latino(a)	0	0	0
White	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0

3. What year are you in school?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Freshman	2	2	4
Sophomore	3	5	8
Junior	3	1	4
Senior	0	1	1
Total	8	9	17

4. Have you ever tried a cigarette, even a puff?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Yes	2	2	4
No	6	7	13
Total	8	9	17

5. If yes, when did you smoke a cigarette for the first time?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Elementary School	2	1	3
Middle School	0	1	1
High School	0	0	0
College	0	0	0
Total	2	1	4

6. Have you ever been a regular (every day) cigarette smoker?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Yes	0	0	0
No	2	2	4
Total	2	2	4

7. Have you ever been an occasional smoker?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Yes	0	0	0
No	2	2	4
Total	2	2	4

8. Do any of your close friends smoke cigarettes?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
All	0	0	0
Almost all	0	0	0
Some	1	1	2
Almost None	1	3	4
None	6	4	10
Missing	0	1	1
Total	8	9	17

9. Do any of your close family members smoke cigarettes?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Yes	7	5	12
No	1	3	4
Missing	0	1	1
Total	8	9	17

10. If yes, which family members smoke cigarettes?

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2	Total
Parent/guardian	2	0	2
Brother/sister	1	1	2
Aunt/uncle	6	2	8
Grandparent	2	3	5